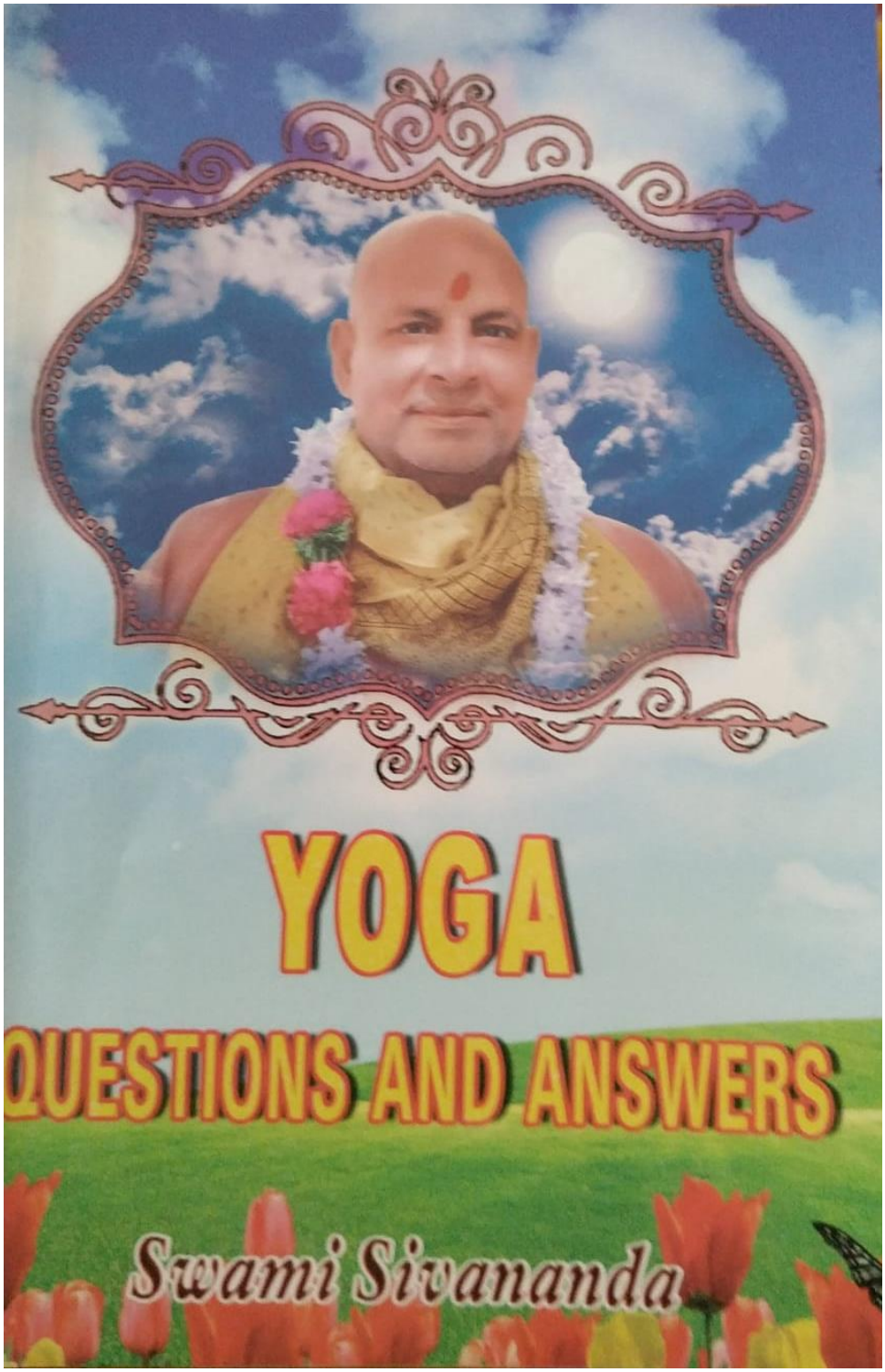
YOGA
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
Swami Sivananda

SRI SWAMI SIVANANDA

Born on the 8th September, 1887, in the illustrious family of Sage Appayya Dikshitar and several other renowned saints and savants, Sri Swami Sivananda had a natural flair for a life devoted to the study and practice of Vedanta. Added to this was an inborn eagerness to serve all and an innate feeling of unity with all mankind.

His passion for service drew him to the medical career; and soon he gravitated to where he thought that his service was most needed. Malaya claimed him. He had earlier been editing a health journal and wrote extensively on health problems. He discovered that people needed right knowledge most of all; dissemination of that knowledge he espoused as his own mission.

It was divine dispensation and the blessing of God upon mankind that the doctor of body and mind renounced his career and took to a life of renunciation to qualify for ministering to the soul of man. He settled down at Rishikesh in 1924, practised intense austerities and shone as a great Yogi, saint, sage and Jivanmukta.

In 1932 Swami Sivananda started the Sivanandashram. In 1936 was born The Divine Life Society. In 1948 the Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy was organised. Dissemination of spiritual knowledge and training of people in Yoga and Vedanta were their aim and object. In 1950 Swamiji undertook a lightning tour of India and Ceylon. In 1953 Swamiji convened a 'World Parliament of Religions'. Swamiji is the author of over 300 volumes and has disciples all over the world, belonging to all nationalities, religions and creeds. To read Swamiji's works is to drink at the Fountain of Wisdom Supreme. On 14th July, 1963 Swamiji entered Mahasamadhi.

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Sri Swami Sivananda

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

This is an age in which all disciples cannot sit at the feet of a Guru in obedience to Gita-teaching: Tad-viddhi pranipatena pariprasnena sevaya.

Specially so in the case of a World-Guru like Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj who has disciples all over the world. They have all their own ways of prostrating to him, doing total self-surrender unto him, questioning him on matters pertaining to Yoga-practice and Vedantic philosophy, and serving him. They have his picture in their meditation-chamber; and as it is aglow with spiritual light, they prostrate to it. Sri Swamiji is easily accessible to them by post and the aspirants get his guidance and he clears their doubts and leads them on the path. And, they take upon themselves the sacred task of serving Sri Swamiji's mission in every way they can-by dissemination of spiritual knowledge, by broadcasting his message, by helping the parent institution (the Divine Life Society), etc. Thus they fulfil the three-fold injunction of the Gita.

The questions asked by the average aspirant and Sri Swamiji's answers to them have been arranged nicely and published in this volume for the benefit of all spiritual aspirants.

22nd December 1957

-THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY

PREFACE

The term Sadhana signifies any process of spiritual practice that leads the aspiring individual to an active realisation of the Divine Being, Sadhana constitutes the sole means for the attainment of the highest value of life, viz., Self-realisation. The spiritual path is doubtless beset with various difficulties. The walk on this path is like walking on the edge of a sharp razor. The aspirant will fall down several times but he will have to rise up quickly and walk again with more zeal, boldness and cheerfulness. Every stumbling block will become a stepping stone to success or ascent on the hill of Spiritual Knowledge. Every fall will give additional strength to rise up to a greater height in the ladder of Yoga. Though, in the beginning, the spiritual path does appear to be very hard, thorny, precipitous and slippery, it becomes quite easy the moment the resolve and determination of the aspirant gather strength, firmness and force. He obtains a new interest and a new joy; his heart expands; his outlook is broadened; his vision is widened; and he feels the help and aiding power from the invisible Hands of the Divine Indweller of his spiritual heart. By themselves all doubts are cleared, answers are given from within; the shrill sweet voice of the Divine is heard; the thrill or Divine ecstasy is experienced.

Even if the aspirant walks with tottering steps, on the spiritual path, he must have vividly before his vision the highest spiritual Ideal. If this ideal is firmly held, Realisation will come by itself. Whosoever would attain the knowledge of the, Self like Yajnavalkya of Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, Chandogya Upanishad will also attain Moksha or Immortality. Some aspirants experience glimpses of the transcendental wonders of Atman; some are on the border-land of the vast domains of Self, the some like Dattatreya, Jada Bharata, Vama Deva and Sadasiva Brahmendra, have plunged themselves deep in the ocean of Divine Delight. The more the thinning of the Vasanas, egoism and Deha Adhyasa, the greater the bliss of the Self. The more the Sadhana, the more the experience of joy of the Self.

Even for a minute, to remain without doing Sadhana, is the greatest loss. Just as the physical body needs food for its growth, so also the astral or subtle body requires spiritual food for its growth or evolution. If one is not regular in Japa and meditation, the subtle body will become weak and one's power of resisting the evil thoughts, Vasanas and Samskaras, will be less. This fact should convince the aspirant of the great need for keeping up regularity in Sadhana.

Any effort in the spiritual path, any kind of spiritual practice, never goes in vain; but the fruit of Sadhana cannot come immediately to the aspirant. As the spiritual evolution is a gradual process, he has to wait patiently for long. In the Gita, the Lord says: Tat svayam yogasamsiddhakalenatmanivindati-He who is perfected in Yoga finds it in the Self in due season. Therefore the aspirant should not be impatient for results, and should do everything that lies within his power to keep up the continuous flow of Sadhana.

If there is slackness and irregularity in the practices a fit of passion or worldliness may blow away the little good result which the Yogic student has achieved and it will be very difficult for him to rise again to the heights of achievement he had one covered. That is why one has to continue in doing arduous practice of Yoga till one is established in the highest Samadhi. That Yogi who has controlled his mind through the arduous practice of Yoga carried over several years, alone will be able to

cognise the immutable Reality that is behind this empirical existence or the world of names and forms. Those who desire to achieve Siddhi in Yoga Sadhana, should bear in mind that significant aphoristic statement of Patanjali Maharshi: "Practice becomes fixed, steady, when practised for a long time, practised without any break, and practised with perfect devotion." Yoga Sutras, 1-14.

MAHAMRITYUNJAYA MANTRA

Om Tryambakam yajanmahe sugandhim pushti vardhanam,

Urvaarukamiva bandhanat mrityuormuksheeya maamritat

Meaning

We worship the three-eyed One (Lord Siva) who is fragrant and who nourishes well all being; may He liberate us from death for the sake of Immortality even as the cucumber is severed from its bondage (to the creeper).

BENEFITS

1. This Maha Mriyunjaya Mantra is a life-giving Mantra. In these days, when life is very complex and accidents are an everyday affair, this Mantra wards off deaths by snake-bite, lightning, motor-accidents, cycle-accidents, water-accidents, air-accidents and accidents of all descriptions. Besides, it has a great curative effect. Again, diseases pronounced incurable by doctors are cured by this Mantra, when chanted with sincerity, faith and devotion. It is a weapon against diseases. It is a Mantra to conquer death.

2. It is also a Moksha Mantra. It bestows long life (Deergha Ayush), peace (Shanti). Wealth (Aishwarya), prosperity (Pusthi), satisfaction (Tushti) and Immortality (Moksha).

3. On your birthday, repeat one lakh times this Mantra or at least 50,000; perform Havan and feed Sadhus, the poor and the sick. This will bestow on you long life, peace and prosperity.

4. When the mind becomes ripe with the true knowledge of Paramatma, the soul gets liberated from of the bonds of birth and death. This is called moksha. The Tryambaka mantra epitomises the special kind moksha which accrues by the grace of Tryambaka, the three-eyed Siva. The mantra conveys the meaning that one is released from mortality by the grace of Siva in the same way as the cucumber fruit gets separated from its stalk. Every fruit, when fully ripe, is sweet, though it may have been bitter or sour when unripe. Similarly, when the soul becomes ripe through devotion, it is filled with the sweetness and joy that come from *Jnana.* All fruits fall down from the branches on top, at the roots below signifying that the root is their source, sustenance and ultimate sanctuary. The ripe soul, however, is the fruit of the tree of Samsara, whose roots are on top. "Oordhva moolam," and whose branches grow down below. So the passage of the liberated soul is upward, *Oordhvagati* Strictly speaking, there is no gati or going, for the soul. It is released at the very place where it existed. That is why the example of cucumber fruit is given. This fruit does not fall down but gets detached from the stalk, or rather, the stalk gets itself detached even without the fruit knowing it. Similarly the liberated one does not give up the world; the world gives him up. Remembering that this life has been vouchsafed to us to get rid of future births and deaths, let us pray to the God of our heart, to obtain His grace to qualify for this kind of liberation of the soul, "cucumber mukti."

YOGA QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Chapter 1

PROBLEMS OF SADHANA

1. DISCRIMINATION, INTROSPECTION, SELF-ANALYSIS

A. What is the difference between Vichara and Nididhyasana?

A. Vichara is enquiry into the nature of Atman by sublating the illusory Upadhis or vehicles, Prana, mind, intellect and the Anandamaya Kosha. Nididhyasana is intense and profound meditation on Brahman.

Q. How to practice introspection and self-analysis?

A. Get up at 4 a.m. Sit quietly with closed eyes in Padmasana or Siddhasana. Look within. Watch your mind and Vrittis. Be a silent witness or Sakshi. Do not identify yourself with them. Note which Guna or Vritti is operating. Watch the mental menagerie carefully. Sometimes there will be a fight between evil thoughts and good thoughts, evil Vasanas and good Vasanas, old evil Samskaras and new religious Samskaras, Sattva Guna and Rajo Guna. Sometimes Tamo Guna will try to enter. You will be overpowered by sleep. Sometimes lust, anger, hatred will manifest on the mind-lake like ripples or waves. They will subside soon. Divine thoughts will manifest sometimes. Try to raise good, sublime thoughts. Generate the Sattvic currents of light, harmony, peace and knowledge. Old evil thoughts and Vrittis will die by themselves by practice of regular introspection and meditation. You will develop a sharp, subtle intellect and purity of mind or Chitta Suddhi and soon enter into deep meditation and Samadhi.

2. DISPASSION AND CONTINUOUS PRACTICE

Q. What is Vairagya? How can the mind be controlled by Abhyasa and Vairagya?

A. True Vairagya is born of discrimination and of mere failure in life. Real dispassion is the effect of the not perception of the impermanence of things, the falsity of the existence of happiness in objects, the knowledge of the distinction between reality and appearance. This Vairagya goes even up to Brahma-Loka, the highest phenomenal manifestation, and discards it as a straw.

Vairagya is mental non-attachment to objects. It is dispassion. The mind gets disgusted with the perishable objects of the Universe. There is no attraction for objects. Through the practice of Vairagya the fatty mind gets thinned out. Abhyasa is the attempt to steady the wandering mind by fixing it on a point or lakshya. Vairagya is the opposite of Raga. If you have Raga for sweetmeats or

fruits or silk clothing, do not take them, do not wear silk clothes. Create disgust and dispassion in the mind for them. This is the practice of Vairagya. By the practice of Vairagya and Abhyasa the outgoing tendencies of the mind will be checked. If the mind runs outside bring it again and again to the point or lakshya, i.e., the object of your meditation, Lord Narayana. Gradually the mind will get absorbed in the object of meditation. The meditator and the meditated will become one.

3. METHODS OF MENTAL PURIFICATION

Q. What is Chitta Shuddhi?

A. Chitta Shuddhi is purity of the whole mind and heart.

Q. What is the fruit of Chitta Shuddhi?

A. The Divine Light will descend. Just as you can see your face clearly in a mirror, so also you will behold Atman or God clearly in the pure mirror of mind.

Q. What are the ways to attain Chitta Shuddhi?

A. Selfless service of humanity with Atma Bhava, Japa, Sankirtan, Pranayama, Sattvic food, Satsanga, study of religious books, practice of physical, verbal and mental Tapas that is prescribed in the Gita Chapter 17, slokas 14, 15, and 16, practice of Yama, Niyama and the Kriya Yoga that are prescribed in the Raja Yoga of Patanjali Maharishi, service of Guru and Mahatmas, regular meditation, Vichara or enquiry of 'Whom am I?', living in solitary places with practice of Anushtana, Agnihotra, and Pancha Maha Yajna, introspection and self-analysis all will pave the way for the attainment of Chitta Shuddhi.

4. SUCCESS IN MEDITATION

Q. Why do I not get success in meditation even though I am practising it for the last six years?

A. You have no Chitta Shuddhi.

Q. How can I find out that I have got Chitta Shuddhi or not?

A. Sexual thoughts, worldly desires, unholy ideas, sexual Vasanas, anger, vanity, hypocrisy, egoism, greed, jealousy, etc., will not arise in your mind if you have Chitta Shuddhi. You will have no attraction for sensual objects. You will have sustained and lasting Vairagya. Even in dreams you will not entertain evil thoughts. You will possess all virtuous divine qualities such as mercy, cosmic love, forgiveness, harmony and balance of mind. These are the signs to indicate that you have attained Chitta Shuddhi.

Q. How long will it take for a man to have Chitta Shuddhi?

A. It depends upon the state of evolution of the man and the degree of Sadhana. He can have purity of mind within six months if he is a first type of student. If he is a mediocre student it may take for him six years.

5. SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND THE PURPOSE OF RELIGION

Q. What is the purpose of religion?

A. To help one attain purity of heart and God-realisation, to live harmoniously with others to have spiritual culture and to bring about unity.

Q. Without suffering is there no spiritual growth.

A. No. Suffering moulds the man. It instils mercy in the heart, develops the will and power of endurance.

Q. You are advocating repetition of Lord's name 'Ram' How to repeat it?

A. Ram means Purity, Truth, Peace, Bliss, Existence Absolute. When you repeat the name, meditate on these attributes.

Q. Is not jealousy a greatest evil?

A. Yes. It is the chief cause of miseries and sufferings of man.

Q. How is it that people with riches are happy in spite of their bad deeds?

A. They are not happy. They are in a miserable condition. Their minds are full of worries and fears. They suffer from various sorts of incurable diseases?

6. A SAINT AND A YOGI

Q. What is the difference between a Saint and a Yogi?

A. A saint is a devotee of God. A Yogi is one who has practised the Ashtanga Yoga or Raja Yoga.

Q. What is the benefit of practising Pranayama?

A. It gives concentration of mind and good health.

Q. What is the difference between pleasure and Bliss?

A. Pleasure is derived from contact with sensual objects. It is changing, fleeting and illusory. But Bliss is eternal. It is attained through realisation of Self or Atman.

Q. Suppose there is a death in one family. What would be the attitude of a person who has attained equilibrium?

A. He will remain calm and peaceful. He will not be affected by sorrow. He knows that soul is immortal and death is only a change.

7. PHILOSOPHY OF LOVE AND HATRED

Q. Love and hate existed ever since the world began. Hence are they not both eternal?

A. No. Hate is not eternal. It has an end when love develops to the fullest extent. Hate is an evil Vritti. It is an enemy of peace.

Q. What brings forth hate?

A. Ignorance.

8. CONQUEST OF ANGER AND COSMIC LOVE

Q. How can I check the wave of anger in the mind?

A. If you develop cosmic love or universal love, hatred will vanish. Positive always overcomes the negative. Try to behold the Self in all. How can you hate the Self, the one common consciousness? Hatred is the effect of ignorance. Your method is all quite correct.

Develop Kshama (forgiveness), patience, Atma Bhava, anger will vanish. Practice of Japa and devotion form a will eradicate it. Try to nip it in the bud, when it is in the form of a slight ripple. Do not allow it to assume the f names of a big wave. Enquire "Who am I?". There is no anger in the Atman. Anger is a negative mental modification. When you try to see your beloved Lord in all these and forms anger will fly away with all its train of vicious qualities.

9. PROBLEMS OF SEX-ENERGY

Q. According to Hindu philosophy, it is said that sex should be suppressed. Is that right?

A. It is not right. Sex energy must be sublimated into Ojas or spiritual energy and this Ojas must be utilised in divine contemplation and realisation.

Q. I have come across a book written by Professor Kinsey, "The Sexual Behaviour of Man", which reveals that out of 20,000 cases examined there was not one who had successfully sublimated sex.

A. It may be the experience in the West. But in India we have innumerable cases of perfect sex sublimation.

Q. How?

A. By leading the Life Divine and practice of meditation, Japa, etc.

Q. Among Roman Catholic priests, for instance homosexuality.

A. They are not real spiritual persons

Q. From a medical point of view people with sex emotions should not be asked to check the emotion or inhibit it.

A. This is absolutely incorrect.

Q. You say it is necessary to overcome the enjoyment of the senses. Why has God invested the senses with a capacity for such pleasure?

A. To delude the ignorant and the uncautious; this is Lord's Maya. One should use the senses in the right direction, to see the Lord's images, to hear Lord's Lilas, to sing Lord's glories, etc.

Q. After enjoying the sense objects' to one's heart's content, would not these automatically become satiated?

A. No. Enjoyment cannot bring satisfaction of a desire. The more one enjoys the more craving is produced. It is like attempting to extinguish a fire by pouring ghee over it.

Q. Why is it that spiritual teachings seem to be against biology?

A. It is not so. You are mistaken.

10. CELEBACY AND GOD-REALISATION

Q. Is it possible to observe true Brahmacharya?

A. It is certainly possible to observe true and perfect Brahmacharya, without which no real success is possible. And it has been done actually in several living or recent examples.

Q. If celibacy is one of the prescribed adjuncts for God-realisation by Yoga, how could the world be continued by procreation? There is no alternative method prescribed for multiplication and if so the popular notion that a sonless father will go to Naraka must be false.

A. Reference to Naraka for sonless Grihastha, is all Puranic way of ensuring the continuity of the Race and the keeping up of the social order. The Puranas are not all of them entirely cent-per-cent spiritual. With deep wisdom our ancients have intended them to be social documents as well, of abiding value. They have included religion, sociology, ethical co-education, etc., in the common medium of the scriptures.

To a Sadhaka who is really dead earnest about Self-realisation, celibacy is indispensable. It is absolutely essential, whether alternative method is there for procreation or not, such trifling questions are not his lookout. When it is stated that the Lord is Omnipotent, can He not fill the entire world with millions of men in the twinkling of an eye? What is this silly thing to Him who has brought into being countless millions of universes by His mere will.

Q. I have got a spiritual thirst. Can I marry?

A. Marriage is a great bondage. It is very difficult to kindle the spiritual fire after you entangle yourself in marriage if you are not vigilant. You will become more and more worldly. Eventually you will be immersed in worldliness, 40' deep. The little spiritual fervour you have now will vanish. If you take to spiritual practices you can annihilate lust; all attraction for worldly life will disappear. You will grow in Atmic Life.

Chapter 2

STATES OF SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

1. SAHAJA SAMADHI AND NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI QUESTIONS

1. What is Sahaja Samadhi and what is its relationship or connection with Nirvikalpa Samadhi?

2. What part does the Breath, Soham, play in Sahaja Samadhi? Does the world exist in Sahaja Samadhi?

3. God men like Sri Ramakrishna said that man lives only 21 days after entering into Nirvikalpa Samadhi.

4. Why struggle for Nirvikalpa state, when one is happy and contended in Sahaja Samadhi?

ANSWERS

Sahaja Samadhi is, so to say, an "extension" of Samadhi so that it covers all the twenty-four hours of the day and not only when one sits in meditation. The Reality of God and the unreality of names and forms; and the inner realisation that the individual self is none other than the Supreme Self that pervades everywhere and everything, comes to stay in Sahaja Samadhi. The Samadhi that the Sadhaka strives to experience through Bahiranga and then Antaranga Sadhana comes to stay, in other words, becomes natural (Sahaja). The ego, the world, and one's own body appear like a glass pane on which has settled a thin coat in moisture; you are able to see through it, yet you see the glass-pane itself on account of its moisture ladness the glass-pane is transparent except for a slight capacity. The Yogi in

Sahaja Samadhi perceives the world in exactly the same manner as a man who knows that a mirage is a mirage admires one when he sees it he sees the water-like spectacle without being deluded into believing it is actually water.

There is a slight (Sattvic) trace of ego in the Yogi who enjoys Sahaja Samadhi which enables him to live to experience and to work. But, as he is rooted in the consciousness of Soham, he is not affected by living, by experiencing and by working. Lord Krishna has given the exact description of this state in the second Chapter (Sthithaprajna description).

2. ENTRY INTO THE BEYOND

When living and moving about in this fashion, the Yogi exhausts his Prarabdha Karma, he enters into Nirvikalpa Samadhi. The ego is completely annihilated; the drop merges into the ocean to return no more. The Yogi does not return to the earth-plane; when the ego is lost and there is cessation of all identification with the body, etc. to which body would be the consciousness confine itself?

Only Avatars of the Lord can enter into Nirvikalpa Samadhi and then return to this earth-plane in order to achieve some Divine Mission. Even in the case of these Divine Beings, it is almost a rebirth. If He chooses to animate that particular body and to work through it, it is His will and nothing more-the Yogi who has entered into Nirvikalpa Samadhi has no will of his own, has lost his self-identity and become one with Infinity. The Lord may either actually take birth in a human body (as in Rama and Krishna Avataras), or enter an already-existing human body. Why He takes birth in a particular family of enters a particular body is beyond explanation-it is His Will-and it is always for the welfare of His Children, for the establishment of Dharma and for the spiritual guidance of mankind.

In Sahaja Samadhi this "I" (Aham) totally vanishes into the "He" (Sa); and One alone remains. There is not even the Soham Bhavana, as there is no one to feel Soham. All distinctions of I, He, here, there, etc., vanish.

3. THE AROMA OF SAHAJA AVASTHA

No one need struggle to pass from Sahaja to Nirvikalpa Samadhi; it is an automatic process. Even the struggle that the Yogi puts forth (if it may be called struggle) is intended only to maintain the Sahaja Avastha. The slender thread of Sattvic ego should be prevented from assuming Rajasic proportions. Though such downfall is very rare, we do come across such instances in our scriptures where a slight heedlessness spoils the game. If, as Lord Krishna puts it in the Gita, this Sahaja Avastha is maintained till the very end of life (till the Prarabdha is exhausted), one attains Brahma-Nirvana or Nirvikalpa Samadhi.

Sahaja being a God-conscious state, the Yogi vigorously engages himself in Lokasangraha. In selfless service and cosmic love, Karma is rapidly worn out, and the Supreme Culmination is hastened at the same time all chances of even the slightest descend from the high Sahaja Avastha are prevented.

4. CHITTA SHUDDHI FOR SAMADHI

Q. Can I not get Samadhi without having Chitta Shuddhi?

A. No. Just as a superstructure cannot be built without proper foundation, so also Samadhi cannot be built without the foundation of Chitta Shuddhi. Just as the building that is built on a rotten foundation will fall down, so also the Sadhaka who is trying to attain

Samadhi without Chitta Shuddhi will fall down. Purity of heart is the first pre-requisite in the spiritual path, be it Raja Yoga, Bhakti Yoga or Jnana Yoga.

5. EXPERIENCES IN SAMADHI

Q. What are the experiences in Samadhi?

A. Experiences in Samadhi are beyond description. Words are imperfect. Language is imperfect. Just as the man who has eaten sugar-candy cannot describe its taste to others, so also the Yogi cannot express his experience to others. Samadhi is an experience that can be felt intuitively by the Yogi. In Samadhi, the Yogi experiences Infinite Bliss and attains Supreme Knowledge.

Q. Step by step what do we see or experiences in Samadhi?

A. Steps in Samadhi differ according to the kind of Yoga. A Bhakta gets Bhava Samadhi and Maha Bhava Samadhi through purified mind and devotion, Sraddha, Bhakti, Nishta, Ruchi, Rati, Sthayee-bhava, and Mahabhava (premamaya) are the stages through which a devotee passes. A Raja Yogi gets Savichara, Nirvichara, Savitarka, Nirvitarka, Sasmita, Sananda and then Asamprajnata Samadhi through thoughts and Samyama. He gets Ritambara, Prajnya, suppression of Madhubhumika, Dharmamegha, and Prasankhya etc. A Jnani or Vedanti experiences ecstacy, insight, intuition, revelation, illumination and Paramananda. He passes through the stages of Moha, darkness, void, stage of infinite space, stage where in there is neither perception nor non-perception, stage of infinite consciousness and infinite bliss. Subhecha, Suvichar, Tanumanasi, Sattvapatti, Asamsakti, Padarthabhavana, Turiya are the seven stages through which the Vedanti passes. A Jnana-Yogi is always in Samadhi. There is no "in Samadhi" or "out of Samadhi" for him.

6. CONTEMPLATION AND SUPERCONSCIOUS EXPERIENCE

Q. What is the difference between contemplation and meditation?

A. Contemplation is Manana or reflection on what one has heard. Meditation is to keep up one idea of God or Brahman in the mind. Contemplation results in meditation. Meditation results in Samadhi.

Q. Can one in Nirvikalpa Samadhi break it at will?

A. Yes.

Q. Whether a man in Samadhi cannot be misunderstood by outsiders as dead and lost?

A. A Yogi in Nirvikalpa Samadhi will misunderstood by outsiders as dead and lost.

Q. Is there any difference between meditation and worship?

A. Offering of flowers, waving of camphor (Arati) reciting hymns, etc., constitute worship. Meditation is the keeping up of a continuous flow of one idea of God or Atman.

7. EXPERIENCES AND MYSTICS

Q. Some aspirants say they see lights and hear Anahat sounds during meditation. Are these all correct? A. These are all the signs of the first stage in concentration. They are correct.

Q. Can you describe the state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi?

A. It is indescribable. It is the state of one's own spiritual experience. There are no words to describe it. It is an experience of supreme peace and bliss. Can anyone describe the taste of sugar candy or apple?

Q. Then how to attain this final Samadhi?

A. Purify your heart. Meditate. You will attain Samadhi.

Q. How can we know that the experience that mystics or saints describe is true?

A. There is a power in their words. Their contact is elevating and inspiring. They are ever peaceful. Joyful, blissful. They are free from lust, greed, anger, likes and dislikes. Their experiences tally with the experiences of sages described in the Gita and the Upanishads.

Chapter 3

PROBLEMS OF SELF-REALISATION

1. PRACTICAL METHOD OF SELF-REALISATION

Q. Can reading of scriptures give Self-realisation?

A. No. That cannot give one Self-realisation. Indeed they can help one a great deal in progressing towards the attainment of the goal by bestowing intellectual realisation of the Absolute provided one has a robust intellect to choose between the rational and the rational, the probable and the improbable, the vivid and the vague, he real and the unreal. But the Self-realisation is more than intellectual enlightenment. It is innate experience of the Reality, effected through a complete transformation of one's nature. Study of scriptures is an effective auxiliary in this direction.

Q. What is Self-realisation and what is the practical method to attain it? A. Self-realisation is the consummation of the knowledge of one's true, essential nature. It is the attainment of the consciousness of the ultimate Reality. In other words, it is fusion of the individual consciousness in the cosmic Consciousness. Realisation of the Absolute is regarded as the highest of all knowledge. That Absolute is birth less and deathless, underlying all names and forms, and yet unaffected by the changing phenomena. The body, the senses, the mind and the intellect are merely the outer covers which conceal the inner, permanent Reality, which is called variously by different people as God, Allah or Brahman.

The practical method of realising one's divine nature is the complete transformation of the base animal nature, transcending the human nature, and awakening fully the dormant spiritual traits within. This is done through perfect ethical evolution, self-restraint, self- analysis, self-purification, concentration, meditation, practice of selfless love and service unto all, and systematic inner culture through right speech and right conduct which is the pathway to Yoga and inner unfoldment.

2. THE IDEA OF GOD-REALISATION

Q. Am I hundred per cent correct in my assumption that you are God-realised, etc.?

A. Different people have different notions about God-realisation. That is because the finite human mind is too small to conceive of God who is Infinite. The truth is that God dwells in every one of us...and every one of us can realise God and His Presence if we will only take the trouble of doing so. God shows Himself to us when we have made the mind spotless clear-when we have got rid of desires, fear, hatred, etc., and when we have charged it with universal love.

Q. One Hindu lady tells me Sri...is a very good man, but not God-realised. Why do "spiritual experts" say so?

A. It is unnecessary to waste time judging another. We are more concerned with our own communion with the Lord. When we succeed in that, everything becomes automatically known. Then we need not led ear to the opinions of Indra' or 'spiritual experts'. Nor need we think of the progress made or not made by persons or great however great they may be in the public inevitable that earnest seekers of God make progress. Some go very high, some not so high. But all of them radiate spiritual vibrations which will purify and elevate but cannot transform one who is not spiritually fit for transformation.

3. THE MEANING OF SALVATION

Q. What is salvation?

A. Salvation is freedom from all imperfections, limitations, bondage.

Q. Is not the idea of getting Eternal Bliss a sort of Self-hypnosis?

A. No. Never. Not at all. It is the highest illumination. Truth is revealed. Supreme knowledge of the Self dawns.

4. NEED FOR SALVATION

Q. Is not the desire for salvation also a kind of selfishness?

A. The ideal and desire to have salvation is not at all selfishness. Salvation on the other hand is the only duty of the human soul. Aspiring for salvation is doing one's duty. If this is considered as selfishness, there is nothing like selfishness on the face of the earth. M

Q. Why should one aspire for Moksha or God-realisation?

A. No one wishes to suffer from the pains of Samsara, from imperfection, restlessness, ignorance. Every soul hungers for immortality, knowledge, peace and bliss. Sages and seers have found that these can be had only through Self-realisation or God-realisation, not through worldly objects. For this, one has to free oneself from the bondage of the world, attachment, likes and dislikes cravings, expectation, weakness from the cycle of birth and death. This is called Moksha.

5. PRE REQUISITES OF REALISATION

Q. Is love eternal?

A. Yes. Pure divine love or prem is certainly eternal, Pure love is God and God is pure love.

Q. What things are necessary for realising oneself?

A. Faith, devotion, dispassion, discrimination, mercy, humility, purity, serenity self-restraint, spirit of selfless service. , enquiry,

Q. Suppose a man works selflessly, what will happen to his family?

A. God will take care of his family. His friends will provide everything to this selfless worker. The family of those selfless workers in those days of Satyagraha were taken care of by the rich businessmen.

6. CONCEPT OF THE SUPERCONSCIOUS

Q. My personal concept of super-consciousness is to have the capacity to express unlimited awareness, etc. Is it Kaivalya Moksha?

A. Kaivalya means "alone-ness" "Moksha" means liberation. The expression means liberation from the bondage of the universe so that the soul may be alone in its own real state of non-attachment to changing things; its state of unchanging Existence Intelligence Bliss Absolute. This state is reached by Yoga which teaches us how to restrain the activities of the mind.

Q. By Radiaesthesia pendulum I received 520 out of 540 in cosmic awareness.

A. Radiaesthesia is capable of measuring only the life activity or vitality of measuring only the life-activity or vitality of a person. It cannot give a clue to the entire personality or Divine Consciousness as is reflected in each one of us through our mind which is only a complex of feeling, willing, knowing.

Chapter 4

QUESTIONS IN HATHA YOGIC SADHANA

1. HATHA YOGA AND RAJA YOGA

Q. What is Hatha Yoga?

A. It is the Yoga by which the body is rendered strong and healthy by the practice of Asanas and Mudras and the Prana is united with Apana through the Sushumna to the Sahasrara Chakra at the crown of the head.

Q. Is the practice of Hatha Yoga necessary before the commencement of Raja Yoga?

A. Yes. Asana and Pranayama are the two Angas or limbs of Ashtanga Yoga (Raja Yoga). How can you practice Raja Yoga unless you possess a strong and healthy body? How can you practise meditation if you have no Asana-Jaya or control over the pose. You must be able to sit on Padma, Siddha or Sukha Asana steadily for 3 hours at a stretch. Then you will be able to meditate nicely. If the body is unsteady the mind also will be unsteady. There is intimate relation between the body and the mind.

Q. Will the practice of Hatha Yoga lead to Raja Yoga?

A. Yes, Hatha Yoga and Raja Yoga are inseparable. Where Hatha Yoga ends, Raja Yoga begins. Hatha Yoga aims at bodily perfection and a sound healthy body helps a Raja Yogi student in his practice of Yama, Niyama, Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi.

2. PRANAYAMA AND KUNDALINI SHAKTI

Q. Will the practice of Pranayama alone awaken the sleeping Kundalini Sakti?

A. No. Asana, Bandhas, Mudras, Pranayama, Japa, meditation, strong and pure irresistible analytical will, the grace of a Guru, devotion-all these will awaken the Kundalini Sakti.

Q. Is it right to say that Pranayama is unnecessary in the practice of Raja Yoga?

A. No. Pranayama forms one of the eight limbs of Raja Yoga.

3. KECHARI MUDRA AND PRANAYAMA

Q. Is it dangerous to practice Pranayama without the assistance of a Guru?

A. People are unnecessarily alarmed. You can practice ordinary Pranayama exercises without the help of a Guru. A Guru is necessary if you want to practice Kumbhaka or retention of breath for a long time and unite Apana with Prana. The books written by realised Yogins can guide you if you are not able to get a Guru. But it is better to have a Guru by your side or you can get the lessons from him and practice them at home. You can keep regular correspondence with him. You can retain the breath from 2 to 1 or 2 minutes without any difficulty or danger. If you cannot get a realised Yogi, you can approach senior students of Yoga. They also can help you.

Q. What are the effects of the practice of Kechari Mudra?

A. It will help the student to stop the breath. He can have nice concentration and meditation. He will be free from hunger and thirst. He can change the breath from one nostril to another quite easily. He can have Kevala Kumbhaka also very easily.

4. HATHA YOGA AND A REALISED GURU

Q. What should I do if I cannot get a realised Guru?

A. You can take an advanced student of Yoga as your Guru. He will guide you. If you are really ready, if you are able to enter the hall of wisdom, you will find your Sadguru or the Supreme teacher at your very threshold.

Q. Why do great souls also exhibit anger sometimes?

A. Their anger is Abhasa-matra. It will last for a second only. It will be like the impression produced by striking the water of a lake with a stick. They exhibit anger only to correct and educate the aspirants. They are always cool from within.

Chapter 5

QUESTIONS IN RAJA YOGIC SADHANA

1. YOGA AND THE LIFE DIVINE

Q. What is Yoga?

A. Yoga means "union"-union of the individual soul with the Cosmic Soul, fusing of the limited consciousness in the Supreme Consciousness. Balance of the mind is Yoga. Freedom from attachment, egoism and imperfections is Yoga.

Q. Can Yoga solve all the problems of this world? How to develop faith in it?

A. Yes. In fact, Yoga is the only solution to the problems of the world. Meditate on the transient, impermanent, and unreal nature of the world. Do Vichara. Understand that all the pleasures of the world are only so many wombs of pain. Know that even if you get the sovereignty of the three worlds you cannot enjoy supreme unalloyed and perennial peace which you can have in Yoga (the union of the individual soul with the supreme Soul) alone. When, through constant Vichara done along these lines, Viveka dawns in your heart, then you will have an unshakable faith in Yoga.

Q. What are the principles of Divine Life?

A. Ahimsa, Satya, Brahmacharya, and detachment and yearning for Self-realisation are the principles of divine life. Divine life is life in God. You can lead a divine life even while leading an active life, performing your duties but what is wanted is renunciation of egoism, attachment, cravings, etc. Give the hands to work and the mind to God.

2. THOUGHT AS POWER

Q. Do you believe in the power of thought? EL

A. Yes, most certainly. Thought has a tremendous power.

Q. Can it be effective from afar?

A. Yes. Thought moves. Thought travels with a tremendous velocity.

Q. have you ever tested it?

A. Yes.

Q. Will you please quote any experience?

A. Many of my students who are ailing were healed by my thought currents. I am daily receiving letters from them stating that they have been cured. Go through the several letters in which the Sadhakas' experiences are described.

Q. Does it always reach the destination?

A. Yes. The thought must be concentrated and the student must have a receptive attitude.

Q. Can strong-willed thoughts of anger and jealousy affect the other side?

A. It does harm to other side. But if the person is pure it will not do him any harm.

3. INTUITION AS EYE OF WISDOM

Q. Once again I refer to the thought force and your experiences about it. Will you show that to me?

A. Please sit down with a concentrated mind. You will experience the thought transference. Close your eyes.

Q. How would you define intuition?

A. Intuition is spiritual anubhava or experience. It is the divine eye of wisdom.

Q. Suppose I wish to pay Rs. 100/- to somebody, but I am poor. The heart cries to pay but the reason declines.

A. This is not intuition.

Q. Do you believe that actions done with intuition are always right and correct?

A. Yes. They are infallible, because the Yogi is in contact with the Divine or supreme wisdom.

4. MIND AND SOUL

Q. How does the mind differ from the Soul?

A. The mind is a special, limited particularisation of the Soul-consciousness which is unlimited, and never ceases to be all-pervading. The mind is the form of the collective totality of desires and, hence, it is inert and powerless. But it appears to be conscious and powerful, as the inner Self or the Soul is reflected through it. The mind alone is the real person or the individual and it is the real doer of all actions. It is the experience of every condition in the universe, both objectively and subjectively. The Soul is the Absolute which is not really affected by any experience of the mind. The mind is mortal, while the Soul is Immortal.

5. THE DISTRACTIONS

Q. The mind is attracted by brilliant lights, beauty, pleasant colours, sounds, etc. How can we bring it back to steadiness?

A. If you follow the path of Vedanta, through discrimination you can clearly understand that what you see is mere appearance and unreal and that the Self, the substratum for the world is eternal and real. Now the mind will not run towards external objects. It will move towards its source, the Atman within. If you think that the external objects are the more manifestations of your own Self and so exist in you, then also the mind will not run towards the sensual objects. If you follow the path of devotion, try to fix your mind on the Lotus Feet of your Ishta Devata whenever the mind runs outside. Gradually the mind can be controlled.

6. THE UNIVERSALISED MIND

Q. When will the mind become universal?

A. When Rajoguna is destroyed by the development of Sattvic virtues as Brahmacharya, Kshama, Cosmic Love, Daya, Karuna, Aparigraha, Satyam and Santosha. When lower instinctive mind (Kama-manas or desire mind) is annihilated, when you possess the pure Shuddha Manas, your mind will become universal. Rajas in the mind splits, divides and separates. Rajas is impurity. Sattva is purity.

7. EASY PATH TO CONCENTRATION

Q. What is the easiest way for concentration?

A. Again Japa of the Name of the Lord. And, a very important point to bear in mind in this connection is that perfect concentration is just not achieved in a day, you should never despair and give up your

efforts. Be calm. Be patient. Do not worry yourself if the mind wanders. Be regular in your Japa; stick to the meditation-hour. Slowly the mind will automatically turn God-ward. And, once it tastes the bliss of the Lord nothing will be able to shake it.

8. CHITTA SHUDDHI AND SOUL

Q. How can I know whether I have Chitta Shuddhi or not?

A. If you have Vairagya or dispassion, indifference to sensual enjoyments, that is a sign of Chitta Shuddhi. No sensual desires or Vasanas will arise in the mind of a man of Chitta Shuddhi.

Q. What is Saucha? How many kinds?

A. Saucha is internal and external purity. It is of two kinds, viz., external and internal Saucha. External Saucha is done with mud and water and bath. Internal Saucha is done by Japa, Pranayama, Vichara or enquiry of "Who am I?' Svadhyaya, Kirtan, meditation, practice of Ahimsa, Satyam, Brahmacharya or Sadhachara, cultivation of virtuous qualities such as Maitra, Karuna, Mudita, (friendship, mercy, complacency). Internal Saucha is more important.

9. BENEFITS OF MEDITAION IN BRAHMAMUHURTA

Q. What are the advantages gained by Sadhaka, by meditating in Brahmamuhurta?

A. In Brahmamuhurta the mind is calm and serene. It is free from worldly thoughts, worries and anxieties. The mind is like comparatively free from worldly Samskaras. It can be a blank sheet of paper and very easily moulded at this time before worldly distractions XD enter the mind. Further the atmosphere also is charged with more Sattva at this particular time. There is no bustle and much noise outside.

10. WORLDLY THOUGHTS AND MEDITATION

Q. When I sit for meditation, I am assailed by different worldly thoughts. When will the agitation subside?

A. In a big city there is much bustle and sound at 8 p.m. At 9 p.m. there is not so much bustle and sound. At 10 p.m. it is still reduced and at 11 p.m. it is much less. At 1 a.m. there is peace everywhere. Even so in the beginning of Yogic practice there are countless Vrittis in the mind. There is much agitation and tossing in the mind. Gradually the thought waves will subside. In the end all mental modifications are controlled. The Yogi enjoys perfect peace.

11. ENTRY INTO SAMADHI

Q. How to enter into Samadhi quickly?

A. Cut off all connections with friends, relatives, etc. Do not write letters to anybody. Observe Akhanda Mouna (vow of continued silence). Live alone. Walk alone. Take very little but nutritious food, live on milk alone if you can afford. Plunge in deep meditation. Dive deep. Have constant practice. You will be immersed in Samadhi. Be cautious. Use your common sense. Do not make violent struggle with the mind. Relax. Allow the Divine thoughts to flow gently in the mind.

12. LORD HARI AND OBJECT OF CONCENTRATION

Q. How to do Dhyana of Hari?

A. Mentally fix your mind at His Lotus Feet. Then rotate the mind on His silk cloth (Pitambar), Srivatsa, Koustubha gem on His chest, bracelets on His arms, ear-rings, crown on the head, then conch, discus, mace, lotus in the hands and then come to His feet. Repeat the process again and again.

Q. Where to concentrate the mind?

A. In the lotus of the heart (Anahat Chakra) or the space between the two eye-brows (Trikuta) according to your taste and predilection.

Chapter 6

QUESTIONS IN BHAKTI YOGA SADHANA

1. THE GREATNESS OF NAME

Q. What is Bhakti Yoga?

A. It is the path of devotion in which there is attachment to God, the partner of the Soul to man which brings cessation of wants, desires and miseries of mundane life. It is the path of Prem which unites the Jiva with the Lord.

Q. What is that thing which is superior to Rama even?

A. Ram-Nam.

Q. How?

A. Sri Hanuman told Sri Rama "O my Lord, there is something superior to Thee". Sri Rama was quite astonished. He asked Hanuman: "What is that thing, Hanuman, which is superior to Me?" Hanuman replied, "He Prabhu, Thou hadst crossed the river with the help of a boat. But I crossed the ocean with the help of and the power and strength of Thy Name only. The stones floated in Thy Name only. Therefore Thy Name is indeed superior to Thee."

2. MAHAMANTRA AND BHAKTI

Q. What is the Mahamantra which gives freedom easily in this Iron Age?

A. "Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare; Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare

Q. What is Bhakti?

A. It is supreme devotion and intense attachment to the Lord?

Q. What are the six means of developing or cultivating Bhakti?

A. Service of Bhagavatas, Sadhus and Sannyasins, repetition of God's name, Satsanga, Hari Kirtan, study of Bhagavata or Ramayana, stay in Brindavan, Pandarpur, Chitrakut, or Ayodhya-these are the six means of cultivating Bhakti.

3. LORD HARI AND THE BHAKTAS

Q. Who can sing the name of Hari?

A. "Trinidapi sunichena tarorapi sahishnuna,

Amanina manadena kirtaniya sada Hari."

He who is humbler than the blade of grass, who has power of endurance like the tree, who cares not for honour and yet honours all, is fit for singing the Name of Hari all the time.

Q. Where is Divine Nectar?

A. Learned people say: That the nectar can be found in the ocean, in the moon, in the world of serpents (Nagaloka) in the heaven. If this be true, how can there be saltishness in the ocean, decrease in the moon, poison in the mouths of serpents, death of Indra (or dethronement)? Therefore the true nectar can be found in the neck (sayings or teachings) of Bhagavatas (devotees of the Lord).

Q. How are Bhaktas to be known?

A. Bhaktas do not care for anything. Their hearts are fixed at the lotus feet of the Lord. They are very humble. They have equal vision. They have no attachment towards anybody or anything. They are without mine-ness or I-ness. They have no distinction between sorrow and happiness. They do not take anything from others. They can bear heat, cold or pain. They have love for all living beings. They have no enemies. They are serene. They possess exemplary character. Name of the Lord Hari is always on their lips. They are very pious. They see Hari in all beings and objects. They never hurt the feelings of others. They are friendly towards all. They are free from anger, hatred and pride.

4. THE TWO ARCH-ENEMIES OF BHAKTI

Q. What are the two inner enemies that stand in the way of developing Bhakti?

A. Lust and anger.

Q. What are the ten vices that follow lust?

A. Love of hunting, gambling, sleeping in the day time, slandering, company with bad women, drinking, singing love songs, dancing, music of a vulgar nature and aimless wandering about.

Q. What are the eight kinds of vices that accompany anger?

A. Injustice, rashness, persecution, jealousy, captiousness, cheating (taking possession of other's property) harsh words and cruelty.

5. THE EIGHT SIGNS OF BHAKTI

Q. What are the eight signs of Bhakti?

A. Asrupath (tears), Pulak (horripulation), Kampan (twitching of the muscles), crying, laughing, sweating, Murcha (fainting) and Svara Bhanga (inability to speak).

Q. How did the Lord help His Bhaktas?

A. Lord Krishna Himself conducted the marriage ceremony of Narsi Mehta's daughter. He brought ghee for the Sraddha of Narsi's mother. He guided the blind Bilwamangal to Brindavan by holding the stick in His hands. He massaged the feet of the Rajah during the days of absence of His barbar Bhakta.

6. THE FIVE REQUISITES

Q. What are the five indispensable requisites in the Bhakti Marga?

A. Bhakti should be of a Nishkamya type. It should be Avyabhicharini also. It should be continuous like the flow of oil. The aspirant should observe Sadachara or right conduct. He should be very, very serious and earnest in his devotional practices. Only then realisation of God will come very quickly.

Q. How to do some kind of intense Sadhana?

A. Get up at 4 a.m. Start your Japa on any Asana you have mastered. Do not take any food or drink for fourteen hours. Do not get up from the Asana. Control passing urine till sunset if you can. Do not change the Asana if you can manage. Finish the Japa at sunset. Then take milk and fruits. Practise this during holidays once in fortnight or once in a month or once in a week.

Q. How to do Anushtana for 40 days?

A. Do Japa of Rama Rama one lac and twenty-five thousand times at the rate of 3,000 daily. Get up at 4 a.m. Do the Japa. Do the Anushtana at Rishikesh, Haridwar, Prayag, Nasik, or Banares or Brindavan or Ayodhya, or Chitrakuta. If not, do it at your own house. During the last five days do 4,000 Japas. You can do one lac of Japa also daily by sitting in one Asana alone. On the last day do Havan and feed some Brahmins, Sadhus and Sannyasins.

Q. How can Nirakara become Sakara?

A. Just as water can exist in two states, viz., (formless) and Sakara (with form) in the form of ice, so also Brahman is both Nirakara and Sakara. Nirakara Brahman takes form just for the sake of pious meditation of His Bhaktas. Just as air is formless and takes a form as cyclone so also the formless Brahman assumes form.

7. BHAKTI AND JNANA

Q. Are Bhakti and Jnana incompatibles like acid and alkali?

A. No. Jnana intensifies Bhakti. The fruit of Bhakti is Jnana. Para Bhakti and Jnana are one. Sri Sankara, a Kevala Advaita Jnani, was great Bhakta of Lord Hari, Hara and Devi. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa worshipped Kali and got Jnana through Swami Totapuri, his Advaita Guru. Appayya Dikshitar, a famous Jnani of South India, was a devout Bhakta of Lord Siva.

Q. How can we practice both Jnana Yoga and Bhakti Yoga? Is it not better to resort to Bhakti Yoga alone and check the craving by thinking of the attributes of the Lord?

A. Yes, you can take to the practice of Bhakti Yoga only. You can think of the Lotus Feet of the Lord. All cravings and desires will be eradicated.

8. PARA AND APARA BHAKTI

Q. What are the two kinds of Bhakti?

A. Apara Bhakti or lower devotion and Para Bhakti or higher devotion.

Q. What is Apara Bhakti?

A. The Bhakta has his chosen idol. He has ritualistic worship and ceremonies. He does Puja of idols.

Q. What is Para Bhakti?

A. The Bhakta of this type sees Hari everywhere and in all objects. His mind is ever fixed at the lotus feet of the Lord like the flow of oil (continuous). He has all-embracing, all-inclusive, universal love. He has not got the least hatred for any being. He sees the whole world as Visva-Brindavan.

9. SAKAMYA AND NISHKAMYA BHAKTI

Q. What is Sakamya Bhakti?

A. The devotee worships God to get money, son or success in an undertaking or to free himself from a disease.

Q. What is Nishkamya Bhakti?

A. The devotee has no expectation of fruits. He wants God and God alone. It is love for love's sake.

Q. What is Vyabhicharini Bhakti?

A. To love God for two hours and love wife, son and property for the remaining time.

10. NAVAVIDHA BHAKTI

Q. What are the nine modes of Bhakti?

A. Sravanam, hearing the Lilas of the Lord; Kirtanam, singing His praises; Smaranam, remembering God, Padasevanam, worshipping the lotus feet of God (service of humanity, country, poor people). Archanam, offering of flowers; Vandanam, prostrations; Dasyam, service; Sakhyam, friendship; Atmanivedanam, complete self-surrender.

11. NUANCES OF DIVINE LOVE

Q. What is the difference between Sneha, Prem, Sraddha and Bhakti?

A. The love that is shown to inferiors as children is Sneha. Prem is love towards equals such as wife, friends Sraddha is love towards superiors such as parents, teachers and others in like position. Bhakti is devotion to God.

12. THE FIVE FORMS OF WORSHIP

Q. What are the five kinds of worship?

A. Santa Bhava (quietitude), Dasya Bhava (servitude), Sakhya Bhava (friendship), Vatsalya (paternity) and Madhurya Bhava (conjugality).

Q. What are the five classes of worship?

A. Worship of elements and departed spirits; worship of Rishis, Devas and Pirtris; worship of Avataras; worship of Saguna Brahman; worship of Nirguna Brahman.

13. FOUR DEGREES OF BHAKTI AND FIVE KINDS OF MUKTI

Q. What are the four degrees of Bhakti?

A. Tender emotion, warm affection, glowing love and a burning passion. Another classification is admiration, attraction, attachment and supreme love.

Q. What are the four kinds of Mukti?

A. The Bhakta remains in the Loka wherein Lord Vishnu resides like the inhabitant of a State. This is Salokya Mukti. He remains in close proximity with the Lord like the attendant of a king. This is Samipya Mukti. He gets the same form of the Lord like the brother of a Rajah or Yuvarajah. This is Sarupya Mukti. He becomes one with the Lord like salt or sugar in water. This is Sayujya Mukti

14. THE PRACTICE OF BHAKTI YOGA

Q. How to practice Bhakti Yoga?

A. Five Bhavas or attitudes towards the Lord have been prescribed by our Bhakti-Acharyas. They are the sublimated inner transformations of the normal human expressions of Love. Vatsalya Bhava (the attitude of treating God as your child); Sakhya Bhava (treating God as your friend); Dasya Bhava (treating yourself as His servant); Madhurya Bhava (treating God as your lover); and Santa Bhava (meditating on His as the Indweller of your heart, as your own Self, in peace). You can adopt that attitude which comes naturally to you. Find out towards whom, in your daily life, you have the greatest love a child, a friend, a master, a lover, or none in particular. Worship God in His corresponding aspect.

Feel that you live only to realise Him. Feel every moment that you serve Him and Him alone through His infinite manifestations. See God and God alone in every face. Mentally prostrate to one and all-even to animals "O my Lord! I see you alone in all these beings." And, meditate on this formula morning and evening and at frequent intervals during your daily work: "I am Thine, all is Thine, my Lord! Thy will be done." You will soon develop intense devotion to Him. He will Himself guide you

from within. Repeat His Name with every breath; be regular in your Japa, Kirtan and meditation, morning and evening.

15. THE ESSENTIAL QUALITIES OF A BHAKTA

Q. What are the essential qualities of a Bhakta? And how to acquire them?

A. Ethical perfection is the fragrance that emanates from a Bhakta. When the Lord is enthroned in the Bhakta's heart, Dharma takes its abode in him. Righteousness becomes his very nature. As darkness cannot abide alongside light, evil cannot exist where He dwells.

Through rigorous self-analysis find out the evil traits, latent and patent; meditate on the opposite virtue, When you do Japa and Dhyana feel that the Lord who is the very Source and Perfection of that virtue ever dwells in your heart, radiating this virtue and filling your whole being with that virtue. During Vyavahara assert again and again that the vicious quality has left you. You will grow in divine qualities.

16. EASY PATH TO SELF-REALISATION

Q. What is the easiest way to Realisation?

A. The easiest way to Self-realisation is to do Japa always, to let the Nama of the Lord form part and parcel of yourself; to see Him and Him alone in all names and forms; to annihilate egoism and to root our Raga-dvesha. The spiritual path is a razor path to one who has no Sraddha; it is a rosy path to one who has faith and devotion and who has totally surrendered himself at the lotus feet of the Lord.

17. DEFINITION OF FAITH AND DEVELOPMENT OF DEVOTION

Q. Is not faith that enables man to read the will of the Maker?

A. Faith does not read the will of the Maker, but enables a person to restrict and annihilate mental distraction, and when carried to its ultimate absolute form, makes him attune himself with his Maker and realise Him.

Q. What is the difference between faith and devotion?

A. Faith is belief in the existence of God, the teachings of the sacred scriptures and the words of Guru or Preceptor. Devotion is love of God. Without having faith in the Existence of God, one cannot have devotion to Him.

Q. When one has neither faith nor devotion, how will repetition of God's name help?

A. It will help. There is a mysterious, inscrutable power in the names of God; they will instil both faith and devotion in the heart.

Q. Can anyone who has no faith and no devotion get enlightenment?

A. No. Not until he endeavours and obtains both faith and devotion.

Q. How can one develop pure devotion?

A. By meditation, love, Japa, Kirtan, Satsanga and intensive study of devotional books.

Chapter 7

QUESTIONS IN JAPA YOGA SADHANA

1. JAPA AND DHYANA

Q. What is the difference between Japa and Dhyana?

A. Japa is the repetition of the Mantra of a Devata. Dhyana is meditation on His or Her form and attributes. It is keeping up of a continuous flow of one idea of God.

Q. What is Japa-Sahita-Dhyana and Japa-Rahita-Dhyana?

A. The spiritual aspirant is repeating the Mantra and at the same time he is meditating on the form of His Ishta Devata. A Krishna Bhakta repeats the Mantra "Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya" and at the same time he visualises the picture of the Lord, Sri Krishna. This is Japa-Sahita Dhyana. In Japa-Rahita-Dhyana the devotee continues his Japa for some time along with the meditation and afterwards the Japa drops by itself and he is established in meditation only.

2. JAPA AND MOKSHA

Q. Can Japa alone give Moksha?

A. Yes. There is a mysterious power in the Mantra, and this Mantra-Sakti brings meditation and Samadhi and brings the devotee face to face with god.

3. THE SCIENCE OF MANTRA REPETITION

Q. Should an advanced aspirant use a rosary?

A. It is not necessary for an advanced aspirant. But when sleep overpowers him he can take to rolling of the beads, and when the mind is tired of Japa, by way of relaxation he can take to rolling of the beads.

Q. What is the use of repeating the Mantra again and again?

A. It gives force. It intensifies the spiritual Samskaras.

Q. Can I repeat two or three Mantras?

A. It is better to stick to one Mantra alone. If you are a devotee of Lord Sri Krishna try to see Him alone in Rama, Siva, Durga, Gayatri, etc. also. All are forms of the one God or Isvara. Worship of Krishna is worship of Rama and Devi also, and vice versa.

Q. How to use the rosary?

A. You must not use the index finger while rolling the beads. You must use the thumb and the middle of the third finger. When counting of one Mala is over revert it and come back again. Do not cross the Meru. Cover your hand with a towel, so that the Mala may not be visible.

Q. Can I do Japa while walking?

A. Yes; you can do it mentally. There is no restriction for Japa when it is done with Nishkama-Bhava, i.e., for the sake of realising God alone.

Q. What should be the Bhava while repeating the Mantra?

A. You can take your Ishta-Devata as your Guru or Father or Friend or Beloved. You can have any Master or Bhava which suits you best.

Q. After how many Purascharanas can I realise God?

A. It is not the number of Japa but purity, concentration, Bhava and feeling and one-pointedness of mind that helps the aspirant in the attainment of God-consciousness. You should not do the Japa in a hurried manner, as a contractor tries to finish off work in a hurried way. You must do it with Bhava, purity, one-pointedness of mind and single-minded devotion.

Q. How does Japa burn the vicious Samskaras?

A. Just as fire has got the property of burning, so also the Names of the Lord have got the property of burning the sins and the old vicious Samskaras.

Q. Can we control the Indriyas by Japa?

A. Yes. Japa fills the mind with Sattva. It destroys the Rajas and the outgoing tendencies of the mind and the Indriyas. Gradually the Indriyas are withdrawn and controlled.

Q. Can a Grihastha do the Japa of Shuddha Pranava?

A. Yes; if he is equipped with the fourfold discipline or Sadhana-Chatushtaya, if he is free from Mala and Vikshepa, and if he has got a strong inclination to Jnana Yoga Sadhana he can repeat OM.

4. DOUBTS IN JAPA YOGA SADHANA

Q. While doing Japa of OM, does it mean that I should become one with that sound, by its constant repetition?

A. When you meditate on Om or repeat Om mentally you should entertain the Bhava or feeling "I am the all-pervading, pure, Satchidananda Atma." You need not be one with the sound. What is wanted is feeling with the meaning "I am Brahman."

Q. What is the meaning of the Mantra, "Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya?

A. The meaning is "Prostration to Lord Krishna. Vasudeva means also "All-pervading Intelligence."

Q. How to dwell on the form of the Lord Krishna as well as on the Divine attributes?

A. First practise with open eyes Trataka on the picture. Place it in front of you. Then close the eyes and visualise the picture. Then meditate on the attributes of the Lord, such as Omnipotence, Omniscience, Omnipresence, Purity, Perfection, etc.

Q. I am not able to repeat the Mantra mentally, I have to open the lips. Mental repetition of the Mantra takes for me much time and even the letters are not clearly repeated. Kindly tell me what is this due to. While doing Japa and meditation at a time, I am not able to fix or to concentrate the mind on the Lord. If I fix the mind on the Lord! forgot to repeat the Mantra and roll the beads. When I turn my mind to roll the beads, I cannot concentrate on the Lord.

A. You will have to first start with loud repetition of the Mantra and then practise Upamsu-Japa (in a whisper). Only after practice of Upamsu-Japa, for at least three months, you will be in a position to do mental Japa. Mental Japa is more difficult. Only when all other thoughts subside there will be pleasure in mental Japa Otherwise your mind will be brooding over sensual objects only and you will not be able to do mental Japa.

You cannot do mental Japa and mental visualisation of the Lord's form side by side. You will have to gaze at the picture of the Lord and mentally repeat the Mantra. Rolling the beads is only an auxiliary to concentration for beginners. The Mala also goads the mind to God. It reminds you to do Japa. When you are well established in mental Japa, rolling the beads is not necessary. Till that time you will have to roll the beads and concentrate on the picture of the Lord. You need not mentally visualise them.

Mental Japa prepares the mind for meditation on the Lord. When you are able to meditate on the form of the Lord, without fear of interruption by other thoughts, you can do so as long as you can. But the moment you are assailed by other worldly thoughts once again take to mental Japa. Meditation comes only as a result of long and sustained rigorous practice for a number of years. Much patience is needed. Beginners get disheartened if they are not able to meditate after a few days' practice.

5. THE MANTRA AND ITS MEANING

Q. If we do Japa of a Mantra without understanding its meaning, or in a hurry, will it have any bad reaction on the person who does?

A. It cannot have any bad reaction but the spiritual progress will be slow when the Mantra is repeated in a hurry-burry without Bhava or faith. Even when any Mantra is repeated unconsciously or hurriedly without Bhava, without understanding its meaning, it undoubtedly produces beneficial results, just as fire burns inflammable objects when they are brought near.

6. EXPERIENCES IN MANTRA SADHANA

Q. What are the sings that indicate that the Mantra is really benefitting the Sadhaka?

A. The Sadhaka who practises Mantra-Yoga will feel the Presence of the Lord at all times. He will feel the Divine ecstasy and holy thrill in the heart. He will possess all Divine qualities. He will have a pure mind and a pure heart. He will feel horripilation. He will shed tears of Prem. He will have holy communion with the Lord.

7. ORAL AND MENTAL JAPA

Q. May I know if mental Japa is more powerful than the practice of chanting of a Mantra loudly?

A. Mental Japa is indeed more powerful. When mental Japa is successfully practised all worldly extraneous thoughts drop off quickly. In Vaikhari and Upamsu-Japa there is scope for the mind to have its own ways. The tongue may be repeating the Mantra but the mind may be busy with other thoughts. Mental Japa closes the avenues, though worldly thoughts may try to enter the mind. In other words the trap-door through which thoughts enter the mental factory is closed when the Mantra is being repeated. The mind is filled with the power of the Mantra. But you should be vigilant and prevent sleep from over-power in the mind. Desires, sleep and various sensual thoughts obstruct the successful performance of mental Japa. Regular practice, sincere attempt, sleepless vigilance and earnestness can bring complete success in mental Japa.

Q. Do I hold enough capacity to be enlightened by a Mantra?

A. Yes. Have perfect unshakable faith in the efficiency of a Mantra. A Mantra is filled with countless divine potencies. Repeat it constantly. You will be endowed with capacity, inner spiritual strength and will-power. The Mantra-chaitanya will be awakened by constant repetition. You will get illumination.

Q. What is the meaning of feeling (Bhava) when one does Japa of a Mantra?

A. He who repeats a Mantra would entertain either the Dasya-Bhava (attitude of a servant) or Sishya-Bhava (attitude of a disciple) or Putra-Bhava (attitude of a son) while doing Japa. He can also have the feeling of a friend, an off-spring or of a husband in regard to the Lord.

He should have also the feeling or mental attitude that the Lord is seated in his heart, that Sattva or purity is flowing to him from the Lord, that the Mantra purifies his heart, destroys desires, cravings and evil thoughts, when he does Japa.

8. SELFLESS SERVICE AND JAPA

Q. May I practise selfless service alone or Japa and service combined?

A. The combined method is more potent. Combine service, Japa, meditation, study of religious books, Satsanga, and enquiry. Keep daily spiritual diary. All defects will be quickly eradicated. You can get Chitta Shuddhi quickly.

Q. Which is better, whether doing more Japa or study?

A. Japa is more important than study. You have studied enough, yet if there is time you can study some elevating, congenial books. Study is highly beneficial. It helps concentration and expansion of intellect, relaxation, and elevation. It inspires and adds to the fund of knowledge.

9. THE SAGUNA-NIRGUNA MANTRA

Q. Shall I do Japa of Om Narayana instead of Om in order to make it both Nirguna and Saguna? The Japa of Narayana keeps the Chaturbhuja Murti of the Lord before my mental eyes. I however have been accustomed to meditate on the Murti of Lord Krishna (Banke Bihari) and am in search of a Chaturbhuja Murti or Lord Krishna with Arjuna at His feet. Please let me know how I should g on in future.

A. You have already created a clear mental image, momentum and force by meditating on Lord Krishna. It is not good to change the form now. Even if you change it. It will come before the mind through the force of the habit. Therefore have the same image only. Do not go in for Lord Krishna

with four hands. 'Om Narayana' is not the proper Mantra. The proper Mantra is 'Om Namo Narayanaya.'

OM is both Saguna and Nirguna. If you study Prasnopanishad, you will understand this point well.

If at all you wish to change the Mantra, you can revert to 'Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya'. You can repeat this for some time.

Chapter 8

QUESTIONS IN VEDANTIC SADHANA

1. THE INFINITE AND THE VEIL OF IGNORANCE

Q. What is Infinite?

A. Where one does not see anything, does not hear anything, it is Infinite. Where there is neither yesterday nor tomorrow, where there is neither colour nor sound, where there is neither East nor west, where there is neither light nor darkness, neither pleasure nor pain, neither hunger nor thirst, neither space nor time, it is Infinite.

Q. Why this evil of ignorance has covered us when we are Brahman?

A. This is a transcendental question (Atiprasna). The finite intellect that is conditioned in time, space and causation cannot solve this problem. Do not rack your brain on this point. Do not put the cart before the horse Remove your ignorance first. Attain Self-realisation. Then only will you know the nature and origin of Maya or Avidya.

2. THE NATURE OF THE ATMAN

Q. What is the real nature of the Atman? How to realise it?

A. The real nature of the Atman is beyond description, though for the purpose of your guidance, sages have given provisional definitions: Sat-Existence Absolute, Chit-Knowledge Absolute, Ananda-Bliss Absolute, Santam-Peace, Advaitam-One without a second; the Transcendental One that remains when all names and forms have been negated-these are some guiding hints. Your innermost Self which is awake while you are asleep, which is beyond your mind, body and senses that is the Atman. First purify yourself through the practice of Nishkamya Karma Yoga. Side by side, do Japa, Kirtan, and Pranayama, to steady your mind. Enquire "Who am I?". Persevere in this Sadhana till you realise the Self.

3. THE ADVAITA PHILOSOPHY

Q. Which is better, the Dvaita or the Advaita philosophy?

A. Both are ideals for different temperaments. Emotional and devotional type of aspirants practise Bhakti (Dvaita). The strong-willed and the intellectual type practise Jnana (Advaita). The Dvaitin feels that he is the servant of the Lord. The Advaitin feels that he is one with the Lord. Both lead to the

same goal, union with the Divine, fusing of the individual consciousness with the Divine Consciousness.

4. DEHADHYASA AND THE ADHIKARI

Q. What is the meaning of Dehadhyasa? Sri Sankaracharya had said to the untouchable "I did not want your body nor the soul, to get aside but the Dehadhyasa, etc."

A. Dehadhyasa is identification of the soul due to delusion with the physical body.

Q. Who is he Adhikari (qualified person) to tread the path of Vedanta? A. He who has removed Mala, sin, impurity, by Nishkamya Karma Yoga, Vikshepa, tossing of the mind or cecillation, by Upasana or worship of Saguna Murti, and who has alifications such as Viveka, Vairagya, Shat Sampat and Mumukshutva, is alone fit to take up the Vedantic practice Sadhana Chatushtaya or four

5. RENUNCIATION AND UNREALITY OF THE WORLD

Q. When should I renounce the world?

A. Renounce the world on that very day when you get perfect Vairagya. This is the emphatic declaration of the Srutis (Jabala Upanishad). That Vairagya must be the outcome of pure Viveka. Otherwise you cannot stand. You cannot stick to the path of renunciation.

Q. Is this world unreal?

A. This world is unreal because from the absolute point of view, it is seen to be self-contradictory, transitory, and totally dependent on the passing modes or phases of consciousness which cognise it. It has no independent value or existence and it gets negated in Self-realisation.

6. THE PROBLEM OF IGNORANCE

Q. Where does the ignorance abide? Does it cover Atman or only the ego-mind? What is our Self, Atman or the ego-mind? Who seeks Self-realisation and who is emancipated from bondage? Atman is non-dual and absolute., How can it be a witness of the three states of the ego, because witnessing involves the play of subject and object? Atman knows not the relation of subject and object. Does not "Self" involve the idea of individuality? Being absolute and universal, how can Atman be considered our real Self? At least Atman can be termed as our Support and Source of power for all our activities.

A. Ignorance abides in the mind-stuff which is equated with Avidya. The Avidya or ignorance is the cause of the appearance of the Atman as the Jiva. But ignorance does not affect the Atman, and is not the object of the Atman. It is purely an empirical principle and cannot be postulated in regard to the Atman. The Self or Atman is Pure Consciousness. The ego and the mind are the products of ignorance. Consciousness which is defined by the mind, i.e., the Jiva, seeks to attain Self-realisation and it is this that is emancipated from the bondage of mind and its root which is Avidya.

The Atman is called the witness, not in truth, but from the individual's standpoint of phenomenal experience in the plane of ignorance or Avidya. When the Atman is realised there is no witnessing of another thing. This, being a witness, is only the individual's conception of the Atman. It does not mean that there is something different from the Atman. The personal relative self involves the idea of individuality but the Atman does not involve subject-object-distinction.

The Atman is our real Self and we are in reality universal and Absolute. The Jiva or the individual is in its ultimate essence identical with the Absolute. It is true that the Jiva, when it thinks that it is only an ego-principle or an individual personality, is different from the Absolute Truth, and considers the latter as its support and itself as the supported, thus making a distinction between this Support and the supported; but when this Truth is directly realised, such a distinction will vanish, and the only experience will be this Supreme Existence.

7. THE MYSTERY OF EMBODIMENT

Q Why should the Satchidananda Svarupa get itself embodied as Jiva and adopt a painful process of Sadhana to resume its former place to resume again the 'Impersonal' Brahman from which it came? Why is this done?

A. The question itself is absurd. It is a transcendental question-Atiprasna. Do not put the cart before the horse. Realise the Self. Only then will you know the origin and nature of Maya.

The Truth is, in reality, there is only the undivided Satchidananda Svarupa. There is none besides THAT, THAT always remains through eternity. Neither does it become Jiva nor is there any questions of 'resuming its place'. Duality is, in fact, non-existent. This can be properly understood by Self-realisation. transcendental experience alone reveals the nature of this pure illusion of Duality. The sleeper on awakening knows the absolute unreality of dreams. This But from the relative standpoint, when still within the realm of nescience, the experience of phenomena and the appearance of their duality cannot be negated in toto. From this view-point therefore the explanation according to scriptures is that the whole of creation is but an expression of the Bliss aspect of the Supreme. It is all a joyous play, a spontaneous Lika, the outcome of His sweet will. Joyous Sakti (Ananda) sports on the bosom of the Eternal undivided Existence. To one who realises this Truth, everything becomes Bliss and Bliss alone. There is no 'painful process' of Sadhana. It is all Bliss. Sadhana becomes a joyful march towards the Mother, the Eternal Spirit.

8. ATMAN AND PARAMATMAN

Q. Is there any difference between Atman and Paramatman, and if so, how?

A. Essentially, there is no difference between Atman and Paramatman. A mistaken identification with certain limiting adjuncts makes the individual feel that he is limited, imperfect, defective and weak. But the moment the individual frees himself from these wrong ideas, and endeavours to rise from the negative to the positive, thereby effecting a complete transformation of his superimposed imperfections, he experiences, then, the Atmic nature of perfection, knowledge, bliss and infinite.

God dwells in every heart. He is absolute Consciousness. He is the indwelling Atman. He alone is infinite. There cannot be two infinities. The Spirit is the same everywhere, and at all times, which is the essence in all creations.

Q. Atman is immortal. Why then should we try to attain Immortality?

A. You now identify yourself with the mortal physical body. You have strong dehadhyasa. You have no idea of Atman now. You have no unshakable conviction of its existence also. You are body only now. You are Mr. So and so. You mind is filled with vasanas and egoism. You are afraid of death. You should realise the immortal Self through direct cognition. Then only can you know that Atman is immortal.

Q. Why is not pain the essential nature of the Atman?

A. The essential nature of a thing is called Svabhava. Its existence is called Svarupa. We cannot separate Svabhava from Svarupa. If pain is the Svabhava of the Self, destruction of pain would mean the destruction of Svabhava itself, i.e., the destruction of the Atman or the Self! To destroy the sweetness of sugar, the sugar itself has to be destroyed. Because destruction of the Atman is an absurd idea, and because destruction of pain is the only purpose of all endeavours, pain cannot be the essential nature of the Atman.

Q. What is Duhkha Parampara?

A. This is the genealogy of pain. The original cause of all trouble is Ajnana or ignorance. From Ajnana comes Aviveka or non-discrimination. From Aviveka comes Ahamkara or egoism. From Ahamkara arise Raga-Dvesha or love and hatred towards objects. Raga and Dvesha beget Karma or action guided by its parents. Karma causes Janma or birth and from birth as an embodied being arises pain. Hence the cause must be destroyed in order to destroy the effect.

Q. Show that Atman is different from the three states?

A. In the dreaming state the waking state is not experienced. Yet, one feels his existence in dream. Hence waking state is different from the Self. In the deep sleep state dream is not experienced. Yet the Self does exist in deep sleep as testified by the remembrance of the nature of sleep later on. Hence, the Self is different from the deep sleep condition. In sleep there is the awareness of the absence of everything. Nothing is the object of the sleep-consciousness. This proves that the sleep-consciousness is unlimited. Unlimited consciousness must be objective Self-Consciousness. Since such an absolute consciousness exists, and since awareness of existence is antagonistic to ignorance, the ignorance experienced in sleep cannot be the Atman. Further, in Samadhi the Self is experienced as different from the sleeping state.

9. BRAHMAN: ITS DEFINITION AND ITS KNOWLEDGE

Q. Give the best definition of Brahman and explain its meaning.

A. The best definition of the nature of Brahman is 'Satchidananda'. Sat is eternal existence. Chit is eternal and infinite consciousness. Ananda is eternal bliss. This existence, consciousness and bliss are really indicate the transcendental character of the Absolute.

Q. Prove that Sat, Chit and Ananda are one and that they indicate one and infinity.

A. Sat is Existence. Existence has a value only when it is conscious, for consciousness can never be separated from our own experience. Since pain is the effect of a want and since want is absent in Brahman because of its secondlessness, bliss must be the nature of Brahman. To put it concisely, Consciousness which is Bliss Exists. Satchidananda indicates infinity, because everything that is finite is perishable. Because, Satchidananda is imperishable, it must be infinite.

Q. In what way is knowledge of Brahman different from ordinary knowledge?

A. In ordinary knowledge there is the knowledge of something which is different from the knower. Hence this knowledge is not unlimited and therefore perishable. But knowledge of Brahman is eternal knowledge which means the union of the knower and the known. This is called infinite knowledge; knowledge not of something, but pure knowledge merely without an object of knowledge.

Q. Why Brahma-Jnana alone can bring about Moksha? Is there no other way?

A. Moksha is the realisation of the existence of unlimited bliss. Anything short of the realisation of the absoluteness is not Moksha. There is no other way of attaining this state than by knowledge. Absoluteness cannot be achieved through individualistic striving and no kind of relationship can be developed with the

Absolute, because every relation limits absoluteness. Hence the only way is knowledge of this eternal Fact, simple awareness, and not in any other way, because it goes against absoluteness.

10. SOME TECHNICALITIES IN VEDANTA

Q. What are Adhyaropa and Apavada?

A. Adhyaropa is the superimposition of the world on Brahman. Apavada is the refutation of this ignorant notion introspection based on Viveka or right discrimination through Vichara or self-analysis and between the Real Brahman and the unreal appearance of the universe.

Q. What is (1) Paramarthika (2) Vyavaharika (3) Pratibhasika Satta? A. Paramarthika Satta is absolute Reality. From the human standpoint the deep-sleep state is Paramarthika Satta. Really this is the Turiya or the Atman. This state may be compared to the ocean. Vyavaharika Satta is relative reality or the world experienced in the waking condition. This state may be compared to the wave of an ocean. Pratibhasika Satta is apparent or illusory reality or the experience of the dreaming state. This may be compared to the foam arising from the wave of the ocean. Just as the foam is based on the wave and the wave on the ocean and the coolness of the ocean is seen in the wave and the foam also, the Paramarthika Satta is the basis of the other two and the nature of Satchidananda which belongs to this is seen in the other two also.

Q. What is (i) Samshayabhavana (ii) Asambhavana (iii) Viparitabhavana?

A. Samsayabhavana is the doubt whether the Atman described in the different sections of the Sruti is one or different. Asambhavana is the notion of impossibility of the unreality of Jiva, Isvara and Jagat in the face of their clearly perceived difference. Viparitabhavana is the persistent idea that the world is real in spite of hearing the meaning of various arguments against it. These three defects are removed through Sravana, Manana and Nididhyasana.

11. VEDANTA: ITS FOURFOLD THEME

Q. What is Anubandhachatushtaya?

A. This is the fourfold theme of Vedanta Philosophy. The first is the discussion about the Adhikari or the fit student of Vedanta. The student should have the necessary qualifications of the Sadhanachatushtaya. The second is the discussion regarding the Vishaya or the main subject of the Vedanta. The subject treated of is Brahman or the Absolute. The third theme is Sambandha or the relation that exists between the subject-matter and the text, i.e., the coherent expositions of the subject. The fourth is Phala or the fruit of the study of Vedanta. The fruit hereof is Moksha or Liberation.

12. THE PREPARATORY DISCIPLINES

Q. In what way Karma and Upasana prepare the aspirant for Vedanta?

A. Karma is performance of one's own prescribed duty without the desire for any fruit therefrom. This removes the Mala or the impurity that is in the mind. Upasana is worship and contemplation of Saguna Brahman. This removes the Vikshepa or the tossing or the distraction present in the mind. Only after removing these two defects can one take up the study of the Vedanta in order to remove the last defect, viz., Avarana or veil of ignorance.

Q. What is the difference between Maya and Avidya?

A. Maya is the cause, whereas Avidya is the effect. Maya qualifies Isvara but does not limit Him. Maya is the Visheshana and not the constituent of Isvara's existence. But Avidya is an Upadhi, a limitation, which enters into the very constution of Jiva. Maya is Suddha Sattva, Avidya is Malina Sattva or Sattva mixed with Rajas and Tamas. Maya is cosmic, Avidya is individual. Maya allows cosmic consciousness in Isvara. But Avidya limits the Jiva to body-consciousness.

13. VAIRAGYA AND JAHAD-AJAHAD LAKSHANA

Q. What is true Vairagya?

A. True Vairagya is born of discrimination and not of mere failure in life. Real dispassion is the effect of the perception of the impermanence of things, the falsity of the existence of happiness in objects, the knowledge of the distinctness between reality and appearance. This Vairagya goes even up to Brahma-Loka, the highest phenomenal manifestation, and discards it as a dry straw. In other words, Vairagya is distaste for everything that is objective.

Q. What is Jahad-Ajahad-Lakshana? How is it applied in Vedanta?

A. This literally means "leaving and taking." For example in a statement like "This is that Devadatta," the words this' and 'that', though in fact signify immediate and remote objects respectively, are known to indicate one common person Devadatta. The differences denoted by the two adjectives are rejected in order to identify the single person called Devadatta. This illustration is applied in Vedanta to identify the essential meanings of the words "Tvam" and "Tat" in the declaration of the Upanishad, "Tat Tvam Asi". The limitation characteristic of the Jiva and Isvara are discarded and the underlying substratum namely, the one consciousness which is unlimited is taken up as the sole reality.

14. DUHKHAPARAMPARA AND THE FOURFOLD PROCESS OF REALISATION

Q. What is Sravanachatushtaya?

A. This is the fourfold process of Self-realisation, beginning with Sravana or hearing of the Vedantic Truth from the Guru; Manana or deep thinking and reflection over what is heard; Nididhyasana or profound meditation on the Self, and ending with Sakshatkara or realisation.

Q. What is Duhkha Parampara?

A. This is the genealogy of pain. The original cause of all trouble is Ajnana or ignorance. From Ajnana comes Aviveka or non-discrimination. From Aviveka comes Ahamkara or egoism. From Ahamkara arise Raga-Dvesha or love and hatred towards objects. Raga and Dvesaha beget Karma or action guided by its parents. Karma causes Janma or birth and from birth as an embodied being arises pain. Hence the cause must be destroyed in order to destroy the effect.

15. SHAD LINGAS AND THE TWO TANTRAS

Q. What are Shad Lingas?

A. These are the six methods of ascertaining the meaning of text. They are (1) Upakrama-Upasamhara, Ekavakyata or the unity between the ideas expounded in the beginning and the end, (2) Abhyasa or an idea several times repeated. (3) Apurvata or the uncommon nature of the subject treated of, ie., the uniqueness of the subject, (4) Arthavada or glorification of the fruit of the study and practice of what is expounded, (5) Phala or the fruit of the treatment.

Q. What is (1) Purusha Tantra, (2) Vastu Tantra? Explain these with reference to Vedanta.

A. Purusha Tantra is dependence on the subject of action. To see God or only stone in the image in a temple is left to the will of the person concerned. Hence it is called Purusha Tantra as it is based on the will of the subject. To see one moon or two moons is not left to the subject, because one cannot see two moons and proclaim that there are two moons simply because it is his will. Moon is one, though some one may wish that it must be two. Hence this is called Vastu Tantra as it is dependent on the object itself and not on the percipient. Knowledge of Brahman is Vastu Tantra because Brahman should be known as it really is and not as one likes. All other methods like Yoga and Upasana are Purusha Tantras because they are dependent on the caprice of the individual. Only Brahma-Jnana is free from such capriciousness.

16. VIDYA AND AVIDYA

Q. Why Karma is not antagonistic to Avidya?

A. Avidya is ignorance of Non-duality and perception of duality. Karma is not possible without the perception of duality and hence it is not against Avidya.

Q. Why Svarupa-Jnana cannot remove ignorance? How then is ignorance destroyed?

A. Svarupa-Jnana is indivisible and indifferent consciousness. It is not concerned with either the existence in deep sleep, but the destruction of ignorance is not effected in this state. Removal of ignorance is possible only by an active consciousness and hence only the waking state itself be unreal when compared with the Absolute Consciousness, but to remove an unreal ignorance this unreal consciousness is sufficient.

Q. What is (1) Vritti Vyapti and (2) Phala Vyapti?

A. Vritti Vyapti is the pervasion of the psychosis or the mental modification over an object in the process of the perception of something external. Phala Vyapti is the pervasion of the effect or the consciousness of the Self which follows the Vritti in the process of perception. In the case of internal cognitions, i.e., awareness of the mental modifications, Vritti Vyapti takes the form of remembrance or inference, because here no perception of an external object is necessary. In the case of Brahma-Jnana, however, there is no Phala-Vyapti, because Brahman does not require another light to illumine itself.

Q. Explain Asti, Bhati, Priya, Nama, Rupa.

A. Asti, Bhati, and Priya are the characteristics of the Self which exists, shines and is dear. This is the same as Satchidananda. These are eternal characteristics which belong to infinite being. But Nama and Rupa are name and form which are only apparent and are the characteristics of the world which are only apparent and are the characteristics of the world which is perishable.

17. THE TWO VADAS AND THE NATURE OF MOKSHA

Q. What is Avaccheda Vada? What is Pratibimba Vada?

A Avaccheda Vadaa is the theory of division or the doctrine of limitation. It holds that the Jivas are parts, limited portions of Isvvara. According to this theory it would mean that all the miserable experiences of the Jivas also must exist in Isvara in a collective form. Hence the theory of Pratibimba or reflection was developed which says that the Jivas are reflections of Isvara in the lakes of the mind, and hence the pains of the Jivas cannot affect Isvara since a reflection cannot affect the original.

Q. What is the nature of Moksha?

A. Moksha is Atyantika-Duhkha-Nivritti or absolute cessation of pain and Paramananda-Prapti or attainment of supreme bliss.

18. THE FOUR GREAT DECLARATIONS AND THE SEVEN PLANES OF SPIRITUAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Q. Quote four declarations of the Upanishads regarding the fruit of Vedantic Nididhyasana.

A. "Brahmavid Aapnoti Param" the knower of Brahman attains the Highest. "Brahmavid Brahma Eva Bhavati"-the knower of Brahman becomes Brahman Itself. "Tarati Shokam Atmavit"-the knower of the Self crosses over sorrow. "Brahmasamstho Amritattvam Eti"-one who is established in Brahman attains Immortality.

Q. Prove that the Self exists in the past, present, and future?

A. The present body has come from previous action. And this previous action could not have been done by the present body since this body is the effect of that action. Hence a previous body must have existed. This same Self must have performed that action previously through another body, for one cannot experience the effects of some other's action. That previous body must have come out of some other previous action done through some other body still and thus ad infinitum. Hence the Self must have existed since eternity. The present actions will give rise to a future body. And this future effect is to be experienced by this very Self. The actions performed by the future body must again be experienced in a further future. Thus the Self exists in the Infinite future also. Hence the Self exists in past, present and future.

Q. What are the seven Jnana Bhumikas?

A. Subheccha or wishing to become good, Vicharana or spiritual enquiry, Tanumasasi or the condition of the thinness of the mind, Sattvapatti or the attainment of the light and purity of Sattva, Asamsakti or the complete detachment from every object. Radartha-Abhavana o the non-perception of materiality in things, perception of the spirit or the essence of things, i.e., Turiya or the last Jivanmukti where the individual realises the Absolute, are the seven states of Jnana.

Q. What is (1) Pramana Grantha (2) Prameya Grantha?

A. Pramana Grantha is a text book which deals with the proofs of knowledge. It mainly consists of logic and argumentation. Examples are Khandanakhandakhadya and Advaita Siddhi. Prameya Grantha is a text book which deals with the object of knowledge, viz., God, Brahman or Atman. Examples are the Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita.

Chapter 9

SOME PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS

1. EPISTEMOLOGY: EASTERN AND WESTERN

Q. Is it possible to evolve a common programme of harmony and synthesis between the Eastern and Western Epistemology and philosophical outlook?

A. It is not possible to bring about this harmony and synthesis completely as the Eastern and Western methods of approach are entirely different. No doubt, many of the conclusions of some of the philosophers of the West are very near to those arrived at by Eastern philosophers also, independently. But the conclusions of even the greatest of Western philosophers have remained only in the intellects of scholars, and they have not yet entered into the hearts of people in their practical life. For many of the Westerners' philosophy has been only a hobby of the mind, but for Easterners it is the explanation of the way of practical life. Some sort of harmony can be brought about if people who have no dogmatic notions, and who can think in terms of pure understanding free from the outer crust of forms which are special to Western and Eastern ways of thinking make an attempt. Epistemology is the portal to the central theme of philosophy and, therefore, philosophical renaissance shall bring about the required changes in epistemology also.

2. THE ESSENTIALS OF EXISTENTIALISM

Q. What are the essentials of existentialism?

A. Existentialism is the theory that things exist simply without any reason or cause. This is the mechanical view of the universe, held by some materialists, who contend that the material world is its explanation and that there is no other cause or e or any need for the explanation of anything. This is the view of the empirical man who takes things as they purpose appear to the senses.

3. PHILOSOPHY

Q. What is Philosophy?

A. Philosophy is love of wisdom, or striving for wisdom. It is a moral and intellectual science which tries to explain the reality behind appearances by reducing the phenomena of the universe to ultimate causes, through the application of reason and law. Philosophy is the methodical work of the intellect which aims at the knowledge and realisation of what really is. Philosophy can also be explained as the art of a perfect life the way not simply of explaining what ought to be, but of directly experiencing that which eternally exists. Philosophy to Westerner is conceptual and to the Easterner factual.

4. THE METHOD OF INTUITION

Q. Is it proper to trust the method of intuition for the purpose of gaining philosophical knowledge?

A. The phrase "method of intuition" is misleading as it may give rise to the opinion that intuition is only one among several methods of right knowledge. Intuition is the only method of non-relational external experience through which absolutely valid knowledge do not go beyond the intellect or reason, and hence, they are inferior to intuition. Logical knowledge appears to be supreme as long as intuition is not gained. Even in the West, where practical demonstrable knowledge alone is counted, the clock has come a full round, and more and more philosophers are becoming alive to the importance of intuition and a correct appraisement of the part it plays in enabling man to obtain real knowledge.

5. THE QUALITY OF MIND: A DEFINITION

Q. What is meant by the quality of the mind?

A. The quality of the mind means the nature belonging to the essential constitution of and the form taken by the mind. The quality of the mind always changes, because no particular form of thought has eternal value.

6. EXPRESSION OF THE INFINITE

Q. Is this inner urge to express the inconceivably illimitable greatness, to be scrapped completely in total humility?

A. You ask if your 'ego' should be scrapped or should be regarded as Divine Force of Superior Insight. As long as one functions in the relative world, the ego of even the highest of men will persist. But to render it most efficient and most useful to the world, it should be preserved as the agent through which God fulfils His purpose in the universe. Adopting that attitude one will find one's ego gets charged with as much of Divine Energy, Intelligence and Love as is needed to carry out Lord's work in the world. When such an attitude is adopted, one will escape the danger of arrogating to one's own little Self the Omniscience and Omnipotence of the Supreme Lord and yet one's work would be done even as the Lord would Himself do it.

7. TRUTH AND FREEDOM

Q. What is Truth?

A. Truth is God. Truth is your own Self. Truth is that which never decays, is never contradicted, remains ever the same, self-contained, self-luminous, positive principle.

Q. What is the nature of Truth? Can science lead to Truth?

A. Truth is that which does not leave one in dissatisfaction, but elevates one to more and genuine forms of happiness until its absolute state is reached which state is uncontradicted by any other experience and does not point to the existence of anything better or higher than it. That which never change and is unrestricted by anything is Truth. Physical science is objective, and hence, cannot lead to absolute Truth. But spiritual science or Brahmavidya can lead to Absolute Truth.

Q. What is Freedom?

A. Freedom is independence from externals. One who is in need of the help of another person, thing or condition is a slave thereof. Perfect freedom is not given to any man on earth, because the very meaning of mortal life is relationship with and dependence on another. The lesser the number of wants, the greater is the freedom. Hence, perfect freedom is absolute desirelessness.

Q. Is religious freedom the condition and guardian of all true freedom?

A. Religion is not a dogmatic faith, but the necessary Conduct implied in the movement towards Perfection. Therefore, religions cannot really contradict one another. All religions are the different forms taken in practical life by the one aspiration for perfection working through different temperaments. In this sense, no true freedom is possible without freedom in the light of religion.

Chapter 10

THE UNIVERSE, MAN, AND GOD

1. EVOLUTION ON THE UNIVERSE

Q. Did the universe develop as merely a physical phenomenon, or did God have anything to do with it, if so what?

A. From the Absolute was born this apparently existent universe. That created itself by the force of its illusive power, Maya. The universe has no independent existence, so that it is called a phenomenon. Please see Sri Sankaracharya's composition 'I am the Self appearing in the December, 1952 Issue of the The Divine Life.

Q. Explain the theory of the evolution of the universe?

A. There is an indescribable power in Brahman called Mula Prakriti. This consists of three Gunas or modes called Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas. Originally it is in a Samya Avastha or the state of equilibrium. It divides itself into Maya, Avidya and Tamasi through the three modes respectively. Maya gives rise to Isvara, Hiranyagarbha and Virat. Avidya give rise to the individual Jiva. Tamasi divides itself into Avarana and Vikshepa. Avarana is twofold, viz., Asattva Avarana and Abhasa Avarana. The Vikshepa Sakti gives rise to the five Tanmatras, viz., Sabda, Sparsha, Rupa, Rasa and Gandha. The Antahkarana is formed of the collective totality of the Rajasic portion of these Tanmatras. The Jnana Indriyas and Karma Indriyas are respectively formed of the Sattvic and the Rajasic portions of these Tanmatras differently. The five gross elements, viz., sky air, fire, water and earth are the effects of the quintuplication of the Tamasic portion of these Tanmatras. Thus is the creation of the universe.

Q. What is this earth?

A. Different definitions can be given from different standpoints. The earth is one of the fields of experiencing the fruits of good, bad and mixed actions, and of performing fresh actions. It is a Bhoga-bhumi as well as a Karma-bhumi. It is a bundle of atoms, a form of energy, a materialisation of thought, an expression of the effects of the Karmas of the individuals of whom it is composed and to whom it is related. Scientifically, the earth if only one of the planets which go to make the universe.

Q. Is this universe an accidental combination of jarring atoms? Please be kind enough to explain the evolution of the universe.

A. The universe is not an accidental combination of atoms. The theory of evolution differs according to the different schools of philosophy. The most accepted view, however, is that of the Vedanta. According to it, the universe is a systematic organic whole directed by a supremely intelligent and Omnipotent Being behind it. From the relative standpoint, the universe appears as a gradual unfoldment of the primordial matter into the visible gross effects, this matter being actuated by the all-pervading Consciousness itself. The effects of this matter are objectively the five principles of sound, touch, form, taste and smell giving rise to ether, air, fire, water and earth, and subjectively the sub-conscious, the mind, the intellect, the ego, the sense-organs of perception and effects appear as realities though they are not actually, action, the vital energies and the physical body. All these because they are based on the one Reality which is the Omnipresent, Pure Consciousness. From the absolute standpoint, there is no substantial universe at all, except the temporary external form taken by the fluctuating Imagination of the mental consciousness within.

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2. THE UNIVERSE AND ITS CREATOR

Q. The world being the Lord in manifestation and the Lord's Will being supreme, where is the scope for an escape from the world and effort for the "same" as well?

A. The universe is, no doubt, the Virat-svarupa (Cosmic Manifestation) of the Lord. But, are you conscious of it? No. That is because of Ajnana, or ignorance. This ignorance has to be removed. The world in all its limited, imperfect aspects, should be wiped out of your consciousness. Effort is necessary for this. When this is done, when ignorance is removed, when you see nothing else other than God, then the world being the Virat-svarupa becomes true to yourself. This is Jivanmukti.

Q. Has not Almighty got any desire when He creates and destroys the worlds?

A. God has not desire. He is Paripurna (self-contained). He creates this world for His sporting (Lila). It is His Svabhava.

Q. What is the purpose of God's creating this world?

A. This is a transcendental question or Atiprasna You will know the purpose only when you attain God-consciousness. The finite mind that is conditioned in time, space and causation cannot get an answer for a question that relates to transcendental matters.

Q. God alone is great, all others are mere dust. Do you agree?

A. Yes. God only is real and great. Everything else is unreal and valueless. I go further and say that God only exists, and there is nothing second to God.

3. GOD AND MAN

Q. Is man created in a way different from the rest of the universe?

A. Man is a part of the universe, which is composed of inanimate and animate entities, and because he is possessed with intelligence, unlike other animate creatures, he can assert and realise his independence by identifying himself with the Absolute.

Q. Dies man have free-will or has God planned each person's life in infinite detail, so that he has no choice about how to act? A. Man has free-will up to the limit of his consciousness. He is possessed with reasoning faculties, and it cannot be said that he has no choice about how to act because he is bound by the destiny. While destiny is inexorable, it should not be forgotten that man is the creator of destiny. God has nothing to do with planning of a man's life; it has already been planned by his previous actions, and the future is in his hand, beyond that.

Q. What happens to man after the death of his physical body?

A. Our scriptures have always asserted that when the body dies the soul departs with the individual's Vasanas and Samskaras to enter again a new vehicle. If his attachment and desire are intense, he takes a new birth at once; otherwise he sojourns for a while in the astral plane to reap his merits and demerits through astral consciousness.

Q. What are the main characteristics of God?

A. The main characteristics of God are Existence, Knowledge, Bliss Absolute. He is conceived of by the finite consciousness as the one, homogeneous essence, all-full, eternally pure, infinite, secondless, boundless, actionless, changeless, bliss, and peace perennial, wisdom, is perfectly devoid of any attribute, indescribable, so that to define Him is to yet He deny Him.

4. EXISTENCE, NATURE, WORSHIP OF GOD

Q. What are the proofs for the existence of God?

A. Who gave intelligence to the cells and the glands of the body to secrete semen, milk, bile, saliva, gastric juice, etc., from the blood? Who gives food to the frog which remains between the strata of rocks? What is the power that sustains the child and helps its growth in the mother's womb? What is that hidden miraculous power that brings out a huge form with hairs, fingers, eyes, nose, legs, etc., out of one drop of semen? It is God or Isvara or Ruler or Creator.

Q. What is the nature of God?

A. God is Truth. God is Love. God is the Light of lights. God is an embodiment of Peace, Knowledge, Bliss and Beauty.

Q. Where is God?

A. He is in your heart. He is the Indweller of our hearts (Antaryamin).

Q. Will a devotee who has realised God get rebirth? Are his Vasanas destroyed completely? Will he experience Mukti?

A. He will not get rebirth. All Vasanas are now destroyed. He will not experience any kind of pain. He gets Krama Mukti or progressive emancipation. He goes to Brahmaloka (Go-loka or Vaikuntha). Eventually he merges in Nirguna Brahman.

Q. Why is it that I have no clear conception of God or Brahman?

A. Your mind is very gross (Sthula) and full of Mala (impurities) such as lust and anger, selfishness and jealousy. That is the reason why you have no clear comprehensive understanding of God.

Q. Why all these articles of food created by God, which give worldly pleasure to man, are generally injurious for health? What harm would have been of all articles of food would have been beneficial?

A. You have no right to question the wisdom of God. You take too much sugar on account of your avidity and stupidity and thus suffer from diabetes. Your doctor at once says, "Give up sugar immediately." No article is injurious when taken in moderation.

Q. Why should one worship God?

A. To become the worshipped.

Q. How often, and how do you worship? What about idols, etc.?

A. One should worship as often as possible, rather, a continuous awareness of God is what is essential. Idol worship helps concentration around which to hallow one's meditations. It is however dependent on one's aptitude, for without real devotion idol worship is meaningless.

Q. Does God ever make his desires known to you? If so, how?

A. God's Will expresses itself through a purified will, spotless character, restrained mind and advanced meditation.

Q. Is not God the Supreme Guru? If it is like that way should we take some soul as our Guru to lead us?

A. Yes, God is the Supreme Guru. But God will not come to you and answer your questions, remove your doubts, help you out of pitfalls, snares, and nets that are on the path to perfection. Hence some advanced soul is taken as Guru to lead you.

Q. What is Divinity?

A. Truth and Divinity are one.

5. GOD AND MORAL PHENOMENON

Q. Why does God command good acts?

A. There is no question of command from God. He has given all created beings a greater or lesser measure of intelligence and reason and He has also endowed man specially with what used to be called conscience. When man exercises all these three gifts of God properly, he will find that all his deeds are directed only towards goodness. In other words, God does not interfere and place any specific command of the nature of the action to be done by anyone. He has left man free to do as he likes, but goodness being the real nature of man who is only an image of God, this fact naturally gives a basis to man towards doing good and punishes him with remorse if he swerves from the path of goodness.

Q. If God is kind and good, why does He allow so many in the world to struggle without knowing for what they strive? Would not a good and a kind father reveal Himself to His children, rather than allow them to struggle in darkness?

A. God is really a kind and good Father. He reveals Himself to His good children who tread the path of virtue and who are endowed with self-restraint and discrimination and who are practising regular meditation. But some children are very mischievous. They do not hear the advice of their Father. They go their own evil way. They do evil actions and suffer.

Q. Is not God Omnipresent and abides in every human being? If so, how is it that we do sins, even though we are Yantrams (instruments) in the hands of God, the Yantri, (driver or operator) who makes human machine work?

A. Yes. God is Omnipresent. On account of egoism and greed lust and selfishness, man has forgotten his real divine nature. He separated himself from the Lord within and began to do actions in his own way for his own self-aggrandisement, on account of ignorance. Therefore he commits sin. If the veil

is removed by attaining knowledge of the Self through purity and meditation, he again regains his lost divinity, becomes identical with the Supreme Soul and becomes a liberated sage while living.

Q. Do the following evils matter to God: poverty, famine, war, class distinction?

A. Poverty, famine, war, class distinction are all man-made evils. They have nothing to do with God's plan or will. He is above good and evil. People associate a good eventide with God so that it might have a lasting resultant effect.

Q. Why the all-merciful God created pain in this world?

A. Pain is the only blessing in this universe. It is the eye-opener. Man would never attempt to attain salvation if there had not been any pain in this world.

Q. If God is good and kind, why all these miseries, diseases, accidents and wars?

A. These are all due to ignorance and lack of wisdom.

Q. Then do you think that in spite of these wars, etc., the world evolves?

A. The world evolves in spite of these wars. Man gains experience and develop dispassion and discrimination through enquiry and reflections.

Q. What do you think regarding bigger animals devouring smaller ones?

A. This is a law in nature. Creation and destruction are natural.

Chapter 11

PROBLEMS OF LIFE

1. GOAL OF LIFE AND LIFE AND DEATH

Q. What is the object of man in life?

A. God-realisation. Everything else is secondary.

Q. Should our aim be to strive for Self-realisation and attaining Nirvana; or to take birth again and serve humanity?

A. One should try for Self-realisation and Nirvana alone. We should constantly strive to ensure that we do not take birth in this Samsara again.

But, since we have taken birth, we should serve all selflessly. If we take birth again, we should continue to do selfless service. But this does not mean that we should pray for rebirth. Self-realisation should be our goal.

The yearning to realise the Self should not be regarded as selfishness. No. When, standing on the peak of Self-realisation, you perceive unity and see nothing but the Self, there is no room for selfishness at all.

But it is true that some great saints have said: "I do not want Nirvana; I wish to be born again and again to sing Kirtan. I do not want to attain union with Self; I shall take birth again and again in order to serve the humanity." Swamiji Maharaj also says like that sometimes. We should accept the utterances of great Mahatmas, after examining them! There is a time-honoured method called Arthavada, which great ones have resorted to in order to inspire people. They often emphasise some aspect of Sadhanas as superior to all else, in order to draw the attention of the aspirant to its importance.

Whole-souled devotion is necessary if we wish to achieve anything. Half-hearted efforts will bear no fruits. We should not desire anything other than the ideal we wish to reach. For instance, in the Preme-Marga, the distinguishing mark is "love for love's sake". So long as we feel that Prem is a means for Mukti we will not get that complete self-surrender that is essential in the Preme-Marga. In order to bring about that complete self-surrender, saints place before the devotees this ideal and make them feel, "We want only Bhakti, we do not want to have anything else, even Mukti." The highest of the four Purusharthas is Mukti. The saints say that Prem is greater than even Moksha in order to be sought after for only then will he have perfect Nishta on cultivating the highest Prem, or Para Bhakti. Once that Prem is attained, Moksha also is automatically attained!

Q. Can you, at a distance across half the earth intuit by clairvoyance or other means the nature of my life-mission?

A. Your life-mission is absolute dedication of all your faculties to the Lord, and not to be curious to know how He is to make use of you. It is not for nothing that He has hidden from our view His higher purposes. Our little mind cannot reason out the meanings of events which He brings to pass. So He does not take off the veil nor need we be curious to know. Surrender yourself to him completely. He has already chosen you and He will give you commission from time to time. Carry them out unselfishly and rise up higher and higher in Divine Service. That will be the true expression in thought and deed, of your Love for God and His creation-the world.

Q. Is there any hope for me?

A. There is every hope for you. You will do wonders the moment you whole-heartedly yield yourself to the Lord without whose knowledge or orders not a leaf can fall nor a worm turn.

Q. Life and death. Which is more dreadful?

A. Life and death are both processes of gaining more and more fresh experiences in the progress of evolution tending towards the fruition of the wishes of the experiencer. Life is a scence where the individual puts on the dress or the form of a certain amount of desires which can be fulfilled in the special environment afforded by it, and death is the time when the individual goes behind the screen and puts on a new dress to appear in another scene of life in order to fulfil another quality of desires which cannot find the required atmosphere for fruition in the present life, but demand a fresh suitable environment. Hence, when properly understood, neither of them is dreadful. Both are necessary processes of breaking the barriers and tearing the veils in the path to Perfection. To the ignorant man, however, both are dreadful experiences. He imagines death to be more dreadful.

2. LIFE AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Q. Why should life in this world be regarded as evil, and why should escape be deemed necessary?

A. Life as such is not an evil. But the evil consists in the delusion and the blind attachments in which life is involved, and the danger to which life leads man, viz., getting into worse states through ignorance than he is at any one time. Life free from desires or passions of all kinds is not evil. It is not to escape from the world, but freedom from worldliness that is necessary.

3. LIFE AND LIBERATION

Q. Does man live by bread alone?

A. Man does not live by bread alone; he really lives by the Spirit within.

Q. What is man's dearest possession apart from his life?

A. One's dearest possession is one's own true Self, and there is no permanently dear thing apart from that.

Q. Are life and liberation opposed to each other?

A. If by life' you mean the worldly life, yes, it is opposed to liberation, for liberation is immortality. But, when through Self-realisation, the state of liberation is attained (Jivanmukti), then spiritual perfection, and unruffled peace and bliss are achieved, here and now. The life of a liberated soul is a boon to humanity and becomes, in turn, the cause of the liberation of other Jivas (individual souls) also.

Q. What is the relation between individual effort for liberation and self-surrender to the Lord's Will?

A. They are simultaneous. Self-effort and self-surrender go hand in hand, mysteriously. Self-surrender instantly draws God's grace, and God's grace manifests itself immediately as self-effort, and self-effort again earns God's grace. Self-surrender itself is the greatest self-effort.

Q. What is the life after death and before birth?

A. Study Panchagni Vidya in Chandogya Upanishad. You will have a comprehensive understanding of life after death and before death.

Chapter 12

ART AND MORAL LIFE

1. ART AND TALENT

Q. What is art?

A. Art is perfected skill in the use or employment of anything to answer some purpose, the system of rules for the performance of certain actions, the work executed or the manner of the execution of a work appealing to the aesthetic taste or the sense of beauty. This is too broad a question.

Q. What is talent?

A. Talent is a superior kind of mental endowment or capacity.

Q. What is the technique of effective argument?

A. Effective argument is based on a complete knowledge of all the fundamental component elements of the subject of the argument and of their relation to the party concerned, and also in basing the argument on the most basic facts which are acceptable to that part. Also the rules of thinking and arguing as embodied in the Eastern and Western systems of logic, play a great part in enabling one to be effective in his argument.

2. GREATNESS AND GOODNESS

Q. What is greatness?

A. Greatness is really independent and does not depend upon externals. It is the sense of perfection or the consciousness of the achievement of the highest end of life that is called greatness. Fame among many people is not called greatness in its strictest sense. The answer is more a question of definition, and the definition depends on the viewpoint, culture and experience of each man.

Q. What is goodness?

A. Goodness is virtue, or righteousness, or the practice of the conduct which does not violate the law of the oneness of all life.

Q. Is goodness the greatest falsity on this earth?

A. Goodness is not false or impossible, but is the one factor which gives real value to life. Life without goodness is not real life, but only a sense of the destructive dance of the evil forces which shall drown the individual in grief. Goodness is the way to true happiness. In the ultimate analysis there is no separate entity as goodness. It obtains only in the relative plane. Where duality is transcendental no question of pairs of opposite arises.

3. COWARDICE, NON-VIOLENCE, HAPPINESSMEN

Q. What is the difference between cowardice and non-violence?

A. Cowardice is a sin. Non-violence is a virtue. A coward can never attain God-realisation. One who practises non-violence easily attains God. A life of cowardice is contemptible. A life of non-violence is glorious. A coward dies many times before his death. A non-violent person becomes Immortal. A coward yields to fear. A non-violent person is fearless.

Q. What is happiness?

A. Happiness is an internal conscious experience which comes as the effect of the extinction of a mental or physical desire. The lesser the desires, the greater is the happiness so that perfect happiness consists in the ultimate renunciation of things worldly, or you may say satiation of all desires in the Absolute Being.

Q. What is the happiest day in your life?

A. all are happy days to a person whose life is dedicated to the Divine.

4. PHYSICAL LOVE AND GOODLUCK

Q. What is love? Is it blind?

A. Love is the subjective mental condition consequent upon an attachment which a subject develops towards an object. In other words, love is the experience of the flow of self-consciousness towards an object as the effect of finding the self in the object, i.e., the act of surrendering the self to the mercy of the object, or super-imposing selfhood on the object. Love, as generally meant by the western novelists is a sham mockery and a regular slaughter of the inner felicity of the soul, and is a mere bundle of foolish superimpositions with a fraction of material reality. It is a constant struggle of denying the fact and groping in the meshes of pure imagination. Yes, physical love is blind in the sense that where this relationship exists, the subject entirely forgets all the defects, imperfections

and shortcomings of the object. But the love of a devotee of God or the universal love which a sage has, is not blind, for it is pure and spiritual; the latter particularly has no association, however holy it may be.

Q. What is good luck?

A. Good luck is the obverse of bad luck. It has no effect upon a Dheera (hero or an intelligent person). The destiny works; self-effort counts.

5. ACTIONS: GOOD AND BAD

Q. How are good and bad actions determined?

A. Good and bad actions are determined by the evolution of a person or a country in the ladder of spiritual advancement.

Q. How do they differ?

A. They differ according to the stage of advancement. The same thing may be good at one time and bad at another time.

Q. If so, how should we think?

A. We should think that humanity as a whole is developing towards ethical perfection.

Q. what is meant by simple living?

A. Simple living is living satisfied with the minimum necessities of life without special effort. GA

6. PHILOSOPHER'S CONCEPTION OF MORALITY

Q. What is morality as supposed by a philosopher?

A. A good deed depends on the definition of morality, especially as supposed by a philosopher. If he looked upon morality as only a convenience imposed by common consent by the people on themselves, the philosopher would presumably attach importance to moral issues arising in that connection. If, very little on the other hand, his views lead him to look upon morality as something more than a convenience of life, as having a basis more fundamental and rooted eternal him would be very great. It is purely a question of verities, then, naturally the importance of morality to definition and attitude.

Chapter 13

THE ESCHATOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

1. DEATH AND THE FACT OF LOWER BIRTHS

Q. What is real death?

A. Not to study the holy scriptures, not to remember God, is real death. Not to have equal vision, not to follow the dictates of conscience is real death. Not to have equal vision, not to have a large heart, not to be charitable, is real death. To identify oneself with the body, to forget one's divine nature, to waste time, to read novels, drink and smoke, to speak ill of others, to lead a sensual life, is real death.

Q. Is being born in lower births a definite fact?

A. Everyone takes a birth in accordance with the wish that dominates his mind at the time of death. If his thought was on a level with the thought of a bullock or a donkey he will be reborn as a bullock or as a donkey in reality, though he may have human form. Scriptures opine like this mostly for making people refrain from doing anything unworthy of human being.

2. PAST LIFE AND THE POPULATION PROBLEM

Q. What is Punar-Janma? If it is a fact, then, the population of this universe must be the same as it was during its creation. But this is not so. Please explain.

A. Punar-Janma is rebirth. It is not necessary that all those who take rebirth should be born as human beings only, or any special being only. It cannot be said that more individuals are inhabiting the universe at present than before, just because more human beings are seen on this earth. Man is not omniscient and, therefore, he cannot say what is going on and what has actually happened in other worlds and in other species of beings. The human being is not given the knowledge as to how many individuals have been manifested and how many remain in an unmanifested condition, and in what condition they are born, in what region. The infinite does not increase or decrease and, hence, individuals who are everywhere in the infinite space can have no occasion to increase or decrease, though they may be either manifested in a particular condition, in a particular number, under particular circumstances, when the time for their evolution is at hand, or help up in an unmanifested state for want of the requisite atmosphere or due to the unripe conditions of their evolutive potencies.

3. HEAVEN AND HELL

Q. Are there such things as heaven and hell? I am one of those who believe that life itself is a mixture of happiness and misery.

A. Heaven and hell are worlds or regions or conditions or mental state of experience where individuals find or create the required atmosphere for experiencing the results or reactions of their actions, good and evil. Though life on this earth itself is a mixture of happiness and misery it cannot prove the non-existence of other regions where the individual has to experience other kinds of fruits or actions which cannot be experienced in this physical body and on this particular earth plane.

Q. If there is a heaven, describe it. If there is a hell, describe it.

A. The heaven is within and without, so also the hell. Both are as real as this world. If you are contended and happy, you experience the heavenly felicity, while if you are miserable and unhappy, you undergo the torments of hell. For a courageous, spiritual hero there is neither heaven nor hell; for he is no other than the Absolute Self. Some of the scriptural definitions of heaven and hell are given in my book, "What Becomes To the Soul After Death".

4. THE CLASH OF DOCTRINES

Q. The scheme of Yama, Hell and Heaven, and torture of souls after death and rebirth do not fit in with the theory of Prarabdha, Sanchita and Agamikarma. Both Christians and Muslims believe in this doctrine of Hell, etc., but they do not believe in rebirth. The scheme of things should be one and the same for all. How can rebirth for suffering Prarabdha Karma fit in with the theory of hell or pugatory and Yama?

A. Man is not the inhabitant of the physical plane alone. He works out his several Karmas upon various planes. The scheme of things is the same for all mankind quite immaterial to the eternal laws whether any section of humanity believes one way or the other. They work impartially nevertheless. Heaven and Hell represent the subtle plane where actions have their inevitable reactions worked out. Yama is but the symbolical personification of Time that destroys all. Rebirth to work out Prarabdha is not in any way inconsistent with experience on the plane known by the name "hell". That "suffering" as you choose to call it may be the resultant reaction of any portion from the accumulated actions of any or more of numerous previous incarnations. There is therefore no clash here. The whole scheme is a perfect orderly system of action and reaction.

5. KNOWLEDGE OF PREVIOUS BIRTHS

Q. Can we get knowledge of our previous birth? If so, how?

A. Yes. It is possible to acquire a knowledge of our past births. It is done through the awakening of the spiritual consciousness. Through the practice of Samyama, we reach a state called Dhruva-Smriti or deep and abiding memory. When this state is reached, then the Yogi gets the memory of previous births, too.

It is then that the aspirant gets Para-Vairagya or supreme dispassion. He sees at once the entire picture of his earthly life; the shoreless ocean of misery through which he has passed. Then he gets the greatest disgust for worldly life; and this knowledge gives him the greatest impetus to plunge himself into Sadhan and merge himself in the Absolute in Nirvikalpa Samadhi.

Q. Why are we at present denied that knowledge?

A. He, who is your father in this birth, might have your worst enemy in a previous birth. She who is your wife now might have been your mother last birth! Think of the consequence of a knowledge of past birth! This ignorance is truly a bliss; it promotes harmony, peace and happiness.

6. REBIRTH AND GOD-REALISAION

Q. Do you believe in the theory of reincarnation?

A. Yes. Most certainly.

Q. Can you give me any proof to substantiate the theory?

A. Study the life of the girl Santi Devi and the boy Genu. She narrated the story of her past life which was found to be quite correct.

Q. Do you think the birds and insects have also their reincarnation?

A. Yes. They too have reincarnation.

Q. Do you believe in the law of Karma?

A. Most certainly. It is the positive, definite, unrelenting law of cause and effect.

Q. How to realise the Truth or God?

A. Serve, love, give, purify, meditate, realise. Be good. De good. Be kind. Be compassionate. Enquire 'Who am I?' and know the Self or Truth.

Q. Is it necessary to go to an Ashram and stay there or to be a Sannyasin to realise God?

A. Not at all. Live in the world. Practise Karma Yoga. Play your part well. Pray. Meditate. Do your duties without attachment and expectation of fruits. You also can attain God-realisation.

Q. Do you consider all these researches and psychology are of no use in reaching the Divine?

A. They are all superficial. They expand the intellect. God-realisation is attained when you go beyond the intellect and develop intuition.

Q. Can you show some easier way to achieve the Divine?

A. Repeat constantly God's name. Sing his glory. Be good. Do good. This is the easiest way.

Chapter 14

THE SOCIAL PROBLEMS

1. CINEMA AND PUBLIC MORAL

Q. Is the cinema an evil? Does it correct public morals? Please explain.

A. Cinema, as such, is not an evil, though it generally wrecks the health of people and spoils their eyesight, when indulged in, inordinately, and leads to several evil contacts. Its great condemnation is when it consists of sensational pictures, rousing the passions, exciting the senses and causing a revolt of the immoral and non-ethical worldly propensities like lust, hatred, vanity, agitation, or any form of sensuality or egoism. Of course, there is no harm in educational, religious and spiritual pictures, though there is always a tendency in men to go beyond the limits prescribed by the moral law and cultural habits.

Q. What is lawless law?

A. It is a rule of conduct laid down and enforced by mere might, and not based on any spiritual consideration.

2. THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE

Q. What is marriage?

A. Lawful and righteous marriage is meant to direct in not only a highly disciplined, but even a religious way to its course of action, the vital urge for progeny. Hence, lawful married life is controlled by the laws of ethics. Marriage is meant for those who cannot have perfect self-control.

Q. Is marriage a very difficult job?

A. Married life is a very difficult life, because it is hard to conform to the rigid rules connected with that life. Further, it involves a certain amount of attachment and the consequent sorrow, even if one tries to lead a healthy married life. It also involves rapid and varying adjustments from time to time between the couple, the lack of which leads to the utter ruin of marriage.

Q. What is the object in marriage and in having children?

A. Love for wife and children should develop into universal love. Marriage is for those who are passionate. One with spiritual Samskaras from the very childhood will renounce and remain a celibate. He will practise Yoga and attain God-realisation.

3. WOMEN AS YOGINIS

Q. Can women become great Yoginis as men become Yogis? Why has sex stood between women and spiritual progress?

A. Sex is no bar to spiritual greatness. Gargi, Madalasa, Sulabha, Mira are all reputed Yoginis. Ladies lack in Vairagya and power of endurance. They have not got the same facilities as men have. Hence many Yoginis do not rise amongst ladies.

Q. What makes women beautiful?

A. Beauty is not an independent value but is the manner in which the mind of a subject is affected by an external form which acts as a counterpart of the taste present in the subject. Objects appear beautiful as long as there is a demand for them from within. When there is no desire, there is no special beauty in anything. It is Maya that objectifies beauty.

4. DIVINITY OF MOTHERHOOD AND POLYGAMY

Q. If it is true that divinity had been attributed to motherhood, would there be polygamy and other moral degradations, examples of which are many even today when society is supposed to be advancing?

A. There are too many unwarranted assumptions forming the basis of the question. For instance, polygamy is not necessarily a moral degradation in all cases. There might conceivably be circumstances which excuse polygamy or in which polygamy may even be justified. Apart from this, also, the divinity that attends motherhood cannot be equated with Godhood in all respects. The phrase "divinity of motherhood" only indicates the acquisition of many divine virtues by the mother such as infinite love, unlimited capacity for self-sacrifice, etc. It is only in this sense that the phrase has real meaning. Therefore, motherhood is attended by a divinity and not Divinity Absolute.

Moreover, to a certain extent, familiarity breeds a sort of negligence. The same woman is as much a wife to the man as divinity in her relations to the child. And man being what he is, it does not take him much to let his selfishness, desires and cravings transcended by holier feelings, gradually, if not at once. Ideally, however, there is no doubt that after the birth of a child, man should not merely think not of sex-relations with any other woman even in wedlock, but that he should treat the mother of his child as his own mother. This is what the Sastras enjoin on man. But there has always been the unfortunate gap between human ideals and achievement.

5. LITERARY CRITICISM AND REACTIONARY TRENDS

Q. Is literature passive in struggle against explanation?

A. It has both phases. In so far as it records the struggles it is passive. But in so far as it brings about a change in the attitude and conduct of men who are influenced by it, it is active, creating conditions favourable to the progress of the struggle.

Q. Can literary criticism completely root out the various reactionary trends which opposed a healthy people's literature?

A. Mere literary criticism as understood today would not be able to achieve this by itself, as the connection between literacy criticism and the people is not close enough. But undoubtedly by influencing the mind of the more educated and cultured class to whom literary criticism appeals its influence would percolate to the masses also in various indirect ways.

6. CASTE SYSTEM AND SOCIAL LAWS

Q. What is caste system? How it came into existence? Is it a help or a hindrance in the path of progress?

A. Caste system is division of human beings according to Gunas. It is the Anadi or beginningless. It is a help. It should be observed in keeping with the altered condition and spirit of the present age. But man separates himself on account of pride and egoism. This brings trouble and quarrels. Caste system was originated for the good of the society, but now it has completely lost its significance being grounded on mere heredity.

Q. Having known the disparity in society laws, why should we err again and again?

A. Personal interest, when they come into clash with established rules of rectitude, make one commit errors. Mere knowledge of the disparity or the unity of laws will not deter one from committing mistakes as long as one proceeds along his own personal selfish natural inclinations.

Q. Of how many can we say that our nation that is emancipated has cultivated the correct outlook on life and portrayed anew the prospect and perspective of Swaraj?

A. It is purely relative. Nothing definite can be said about it. The only affirmations that can be made with any confidence is that the number of such persons is extremely few.

Chapter 15

THE HINDU, KARMA AND RELIGIOUS LIFE

1. HINDU AND THE HINDU SCRIPTURES

Q. What are the Hindu scriptures?

A. (a) Srutis, (b) Smritis, (c) Itihasas, (d) Puranas, (e) Agamas, (f) Darshanas.

Q. Who is a good Hindu? How should a good man be judged?

A. A good Hindu always lives with God. He lives in God. He has a divinity within him. Goodness is love in action. A good man has no enemy.

Q. How can a Hindu whose whole fabric of thought centres in God believe in Buddhism which is agnostic, or in Jainism which is atheistic?

A. Though the tenets of Buddhism and Jainism have their own good points which only a very liberal thinker can understand, it is not necessary that the Hindu should accept all of them when he finds that some of them are not in conformity with certain undeniable truths. Their ethical teachings are worthy of reverence and practice, which is a part and parcel of Hinduism and without which worship of God is void.

Q. Do you believe whole-heartedly that Hinduism is the best religion? Why or why not?

A. All religions are best in their own way. Hinduism is dear to us because it is a universal religion, admits no differentiation or prejudice.

Q. Do you think that your religious outlook has been influenced by other great religions with whose adherents you have been in contact? As for example, Buddhism and Christianity

A. Hinduism is so ancient, so profound and so complete in its aspects, if properly understood, that a Hindu need require no influence from other religions to mould and evolve his outlook, though they might serve as an inspiration to him.

Q. Is salvation attainable by various methods, or only by the Hindu method?

A. The attainment of salvation is not restricted to a single method. The paths are many but the finale is the same.

Q. What is the quintessence of the Gita?

A. The quintessence of the Gita is selfless or motiveless action dedicated to God, the practice of detachment, self-abnegation, self control, constant remembrance of God, and total self-surrender to God.

Q. Do you desire great comfort and inspiration from Gita?

A. Why comfort and inspiration alone? Gita has a tremendous transforming influence on the devotee.

2. MASTERY OVER KARMA

Q. How can we overcome Karma? Can we break Karma which is created by the Almighty?

A. Karma is your own creation. You can overcome Karma through Purushartha. Karma is no Karma if you do it without agency and expectation of fruits. You will have to clearly understand the technique of Karma Yoga and practice it daily with zeal and earnestness.

Q. In what way Karma and Upasana prepare the aspirant for Vedanta?

A. Karma is performance of one's own prescribed duty without the desire for any fruit therefrom. This removes the Mala or the impurity that is in the mind Upasana is worship and contemplation of Saguna Brahman. This removes the Vikshepa or the tossing or the distraction present in the mind. Only after removing these two defects can one take up the study of the Vedanta in order to remove the last defect, viz., Avarana or veil of ignorance.

3. SPIRITUAL HUNGER AND ENLIGHTENMENT

Q. What is spiritual hunger?

A. Spiritual hunger means thirst for God's Darshan. Spiritual hunger is the ultimate meaning of every activity in life. The dissatisfaction and the restlessness that remains even after obtaining all the necessities of life show that everyone, consciously or unconsciously does suffer from spiritual hunger, and it is not appeased until the spirit within is realised. Without this divine discontent there is no real progress.

Q. Who is a religious or spiritual man?

A. A religious man is attached to the Lotus Feet of the Lord. He is endowed with right conduct, is ever engaged in doing God's Will. He is free from lust, anger and greed. He is endowed with all virtues. He has equal vision. He is ever serene. He has self-control. He is modest, forgiving, and humble.

Q. Can asceticism lead to enlightenment?

A. Asceticism is really the austere life of sense-control and mental concentration lived for the purposes of devotional practices or spiritual meditations. True asceticism necessarily includes the strict observance of the moral and ethical disciplines, on the basis of which the higher practices are undertaken.

Asceticism is a means to enlightenment inasmuch as it prepares the ground for mediation which leads to wisdom and realisation. Sometimes asceticism is taken in its narrower sense of bodily mortifications alone. But this is a grave error and this alone cannot lead to enlightenment without the calming of the passions and discipline of the mind.

Q. Why is the Hindu Dharma called Sanatana Dharma? Why not other Dharmas?

A. The Hindu Dharma is called "Sanatana" because it existed from the very beginning and as its beginning is not known. What has a beginning must have an end. The other Dharmas or religions were of later origin. So they are not called by that name.

4. EVOLUTION AND THE LAW OF KARMA

Q. What are the Karmas of those souls who come to this world for the first time?

A. The world is Anadior beginningless. Karma is also Anadi. The path of Karma is mysterious. Get knowledge of the Self. The mystery of Karma will be revealed unto you.

Q. If the evolution of the Jivas other than that of the Human Kingdom is progressive and if the law of Karma is not applicable to them, then why one Jiva, say a cow, enjoys a comfortable life in the rich man's stable while the other goes without food and dies uncared for?

A. It is erroneous to assume that evolution in the sub-human kingdom is outside the pale of Karmic law. The very progressive evolution of sub-human soul groups works under the law of Karma. The cow that enjoys a comfortable life is a good human being temporarily thrown into lower womb to work out some Wrong Karma. The other cow is very vicious soul once again working its way up towards human birth. Whereas the soul arriving at a cow's stage through natural evolution is likely to have a neutral sort of life not touching either extremes of comfort or suffering.

5. DESTINY, HARD FATE, SELF-EFFORT

Q. What is the use of trying to do this or that thing and wasting our energies if we are completely bound by our past actions?

A. You are not bound. You have got free-will. You cannot change the experiences, the result of Prarabdha, but you can change your future by right thinking and right action and thus make your will pure and irresistible. You can attain Self-realisation with the help of this dynamic will.

Q. It is said that birth, marriage and death are predestined. Can we not change our destiny of marriage and lead a single life?

A. You can change your destiny by strong will- power, by leading a purely spiritual life.

Q. Leaving aside Mahatmas and Saints, to what extent an ordinary man like myself can change his present destiny by his limited self-effort?

A. You can also change your destiny like Mahatmas and Saints. But you should be under the guidance of a Guru for some years.

Q. What is hard fate?

A. Hard fate is the name given to that unseen force which brings unpleasant experiences and tests one's patience, and in which the man concerned is inclined to believe that he deserved a much better fate than that he has obtained. There is no such thing as accident or chance or fate or luck in life except only the results of one's own previous actions that have all these appellations.

6. FAITH, PRAYER, RELIGION

Q. What is Faith?

A. Faith is firm and earnest belief in what is declared by another. It is belief in or settled conviction in regard to what is given forth as a revelation, e.g., revelation of man's relation to God. Firm opinion independent of logical proof of reasoning is faith.

Q. What is Prayer? Can the power of prayer form a bridge for Universal brotherhood?

A. Prayer consists in a heart-felt glorification of and supplicatory thoughts or words dedicated to the object or prayer, preceded by the acceptance of the limitedness and imperfection or deficiency of the one who prays. True prayer is the earnest attempt to lay oneself open fully to the divine will. It is the manifestation of the earnest aspiration to know. To feel and to be led and guided by the Divine Being. Prayer to God can bring about any change if people realise the effectiveness of this method and take recourse to it earnestly.

Q. What is Religion? Has it anything to do with politics?

A. Religion is the attitude of reverence which human beings have towards the Supreme Being, based on the relationship that exists between them and the Supreme Being. This reverence may take different form in different persons because of the differences in the conceptions of the relation that is between man and the Supreme Being. Politics is meant for the betterment of people, and no real betterment is possible without the consciousness of the relation between man and God, of which religion is the form.

7. GOD, IDOL WORSHIP, SPIRITUAL EVOLUTION

Q. What is the use of idol worship?

A. Idol worship purifies the mind, causes concentration and generates Divine Bhava in the worshipper. The mind is divinised. "As a man thinketh, so he becomes" is the immutable psychological law. The worshipper superimposes the Lord on the idol. Lord Gouranga saw Sri Krishna in the Murthi of Jagannath Puri, went into an ecstatic mood to embrace the Murthi and swooned. People who are immersed in worldliness and sensual pleasures begin to doubt about the efficacy of idol worship.

Q. Can we get Moksha through idol worship?

A. Moksha is attained through knowledge of Atman. Idol worship is the first stage in the spiritual life for beginners. As mind cannot remain without attaching itself to a form, for neophytes idol worship is very necessary to fix the mind.

Q. Is idol worship necessary for spiritual evolution?

A. Idol worship is necessary for spiritual evolution. It is one of the stages. No one can think of his father without knowing his figure, and without bringing that picture before his mind's eye. The Nirakara aspect of one's own father is nothing. So also if God is pictured as Siva or Ganesha or Durga, the devotee can concentrate his mind on that form-enter into deep meditation, and ultimately merge into Samadhi (blissful union). Thus Saguna worship or idol worship is one of the steps for God-realisation. So it is absolutely necessary for spiritual evolution.

Q. Is it not better to regard the image of the Lord as the reflection of the Lord seated in the heart?

A. Yes, you can take the Lord in the temple as the reflection of the Lord seated in your heart.

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Q. When I prepare for the examination is it not also a form of worship of the Lord?

A. Yes, the preparation for the examination is worship of the Lord. Even talking, breathing, eating, sitting, are all worship of the Lord. You will have to change your angle of vision and get yourself established in this Bhava.

Q. What is God? I have to invite Him in so many forms. What is His own natural form? I don't know whether he would like the form I give. Can I limit or confine Him in these forms? Is it not wrong?

A. Just as vapour or steam is formless, so also God is formless in his unmanifested or transcendental state. He takes a form to please His devotees. He assumes a form for the pious worship of His Bhaktas. He gives Darshan to His devotees in the form in which they meditate. For a devotee who has Preme Nishta, a form is necessary. When he develops Para-Bhakti, the form will vanish away and he will become one with the all-pervading pure consciousness.

Q. Why animals, etc., are killed and offered in some Devi Temples? Is this practice good? Does it conform the religious prescription?

A. Animal sacrifices in particular Devi temples are usually the keeping up of long-standing local tradition and custom. It is definitely not good. It does not conform to religious prescription; but is outcome of perverted interpretation of scriptural texts.

Chapter 16

THE GURU, AVATAR AND THE SUPRAMENTAL RACE

1. THE NEED FOR SPIRITUAL GUIDE

Q. Is a Guru necessary for Self-realisation?

A. Undoubtedly. A spiritual preceptor is absolutely necessary for everyone. In the initial stages an aspirant will have to face many difficulties and doubts in his path. He must have somebody who is much more acquainted with the subject of his quest than himself and to whom he can approach to get his doubts cleared. Even ordinary secular sciences have to be learnt from a teacher. A primary student would not fare well in his examination if he reads his lessons all by himself without the aid of a private teacher or without having to go to school. To learn the science of Self-knowledge one must have a reliable guide. He should study well the very best of the literature available on the subject, so as to affect a necessary moulding of his ideas and intellectual conviction, together with the advice of his teacher, through faith, devotion, perseverance and practical application to the pursuit of his quest, as well as through observation and company of holy men. It is only the Guru who will find out your defects. The nature of egoism is such that you will not be able to find out your own defects or be convinced of their pernicious effect. In the case of a very few emotionally matured, intellectually precise, decisive and enlightened, and spiritually exalted souls, they themselves can be their guides, and the purity of their hearts will enable them to decide the voice of God from within and guide their actions accordingly.

Q. Is it essential to learn Yoga from a Guru, who has himself done Yoga-sadhana and has achieved success in it?

A. Yes, one needs the guidance of a Guru. But he can do a lot at home itself and gradually evolve. The world is a great teacher. You can learn ever so many valuable lessons from it. While leading a householder's life you can develop many virtues. Self-control should be practised while living in the world of temptations. You can do Japa, Asanas, Pranayama and meditation at home. Lead a simple and austere life. Be honest and charitable. Induce your wife too to read religious books like Ramayana, Gita, etc. Thus you can prepare yourself gradually for the rigid life of a Sannyasin. Maintain a spiritual diary and send it on to me for review. Come here in your holidays and undergo the necessary training and discipline. If you suddenly desert your family you shall be giving a shock to them. Let it be gradual; in the course of some years all bonds will be broken, when you can completely devote yourself to Sadhana.

2. THE ATTAINMENTS OF A GURU

Q. What are the qualifications and the essential qualities of a real Guru, teacher or a true guide? Is it possible for an ordinary human being to select a real guide? If so, how?

A. Real Guru is a Srotriya and a Brahmanishta, one who is learned in the scriptures and established in Brahman. He, who is wise, desireless and sinless, can be a true teacher and guide. The Guru, by virtue of his wisdom and capacity, draws towards himself the souls fit to be guided by him. When one feels that he is thus spontaneously drawn to a Mahapurusha whom he cannot help loving, admiring and serving, who is an embodiment of unruffled tranquillity, mercy and spiritual experience, such a great one can be taken as the Guru. A Guru will be free from lust, anger, greed, egoism, hatred, jealousy, selfishness. He will have self-restraint, peace, perfect knowledge of the technique of all practices of Yoga, balanced mind, equal vision, generosity, tolerance, forgiveness, and patience. He will be able to remove the doubts of the aspirants. In his presence all doubts will vanish by themselves. He will be in possession of divine knowledge through Nirvikalpa Samadhi. In his presence you will enjoy peace, you will be inspired and elevated. In his presence you will have a peculiar thrill of joy, peace and upheaval. A Guru is one in whom the disciple can find no defect and who serves as the ideal to be reached by the disciple. In short, the Guru is God in manifested form and when Divinity is seen in a person he can be chosen as the Guru. Relation between the Guru and the Sishya is genuine and unbreakable, even as that between God and man is. It is a natural law that when a certain event has to take place in the universe the conditions necessary for the same are brought about exactly at the proper time. When the disciple is ready to receive the higher Light, he is brought into contact with a suitable Guru by the Supreme Dispensation.

3. THE MASTER AND THE DISCIPLE

Q. Is it too much for a teacher to make his followers great?

A. The question assumes that the teacher has attachment for his disciples in preference to others. If he had that, he would not be a spiritual teacher, because the first qualification for a spiritual man is conquest of attachment. The fact is that out of millions one is found to have the qualification and it is he who comes up as the great-the superman. Each such great man is surrounded by men who are attracted by his inherent charm. But those who are so surrounding are not the people who are qualified to be masters. They are just ordinary men and no more.

Q. A rather unusual lady studied for ten years under the strictest Yogic discipline with some of the "greatest of all great Yogi" and finally came to the conclusion that it is all a hoax and a mirage.

A. From your account of her, she was not qualified to benefit by contact with anyone, even if that one had the spiritual greatness of Lord Buddha Himself. The one thing needed for spiritual progress is perseverance. She was stuffing herself with the writings of many, each of whom pointed a different path. One who wants to sink a well, must go on digging in one place till one strikes water. If he digs pits in a hundred places each not more than 5 feet deep, he will not have dug a well. That was her case. What value can be attached to her opinions?

Q. John Kelly wrote 200 or 300 letters to Sri...Ashram and got no reply. If you feel a cosmic impulsion to write to him, I will give him your letter.

A. You need not take the trouble of bringing about a contact between John Kelly and myself. One ought to feel thirsty before he asks for water.

4. THE PROBLEM OF TWO GUIDES

Q. I have read that a person, after receiving initiation from one Guru, can, if he finds a better person, become the latter's disciple; and that though he has ceased to be the former's disciple, he should have respect for him also. What is your view?

A. The vast majority of the people do not enjoy the good fortune of coming into contact with a God-realised saint. What happens in their case is this. Traditionally, each family has a Guru-Parampara. Each sect has its own sectional Guru. The aspirant born in that family has by that mere fact, to accept this person as his Guru. This Guru is by y no means fit to be called so, according to the standards set by our Sastras. He is not a spiritual personality, but a religious person. He does not possess Adhyatmic realisation, but is appointed as a religious leader in order not to keep this traditional post vacant. The aspirant takes him as his Guru and receives initiation from him. He practises Sadhana according to his Guru's teachings and up to a certain point he can certainly progress. Up to this point only that Guru himself has gone! To go beyond that stage, that Guru cannot guide the aspirant, because he is not a God-realised sage. At that stage, if the Sadhaka happens to meet a Guru of higher achievements, he can certainly become his disciple. In fact, if his first Guru is sincere he will himself direct the disciple to the feet of another Guru of higher achievements.

Namadev was one of the greatest of the Maharashtra saints. But he had only Sakar realisation. He had not attained Brahma-Jnana. Gora, the potter saint, taps his head and says: This is half-baked!!!

Therefore, the Guru directs him to a Brahma-Nishta Guru of Advaita realisation, Vishoba. From Vishoba he receives the highest initiation.

If this question of changing the Guru arises in an aspirant who has already received initiation from a Guru who has reached the highest stage, the defect is in the aspirant, not in the Guru. And, even if the aspirant goes to another Guru this "want" cannot be fulfilled. He must correct the defect in himself and stick to his Guru; he must banish the desire to change his Guru.

Scriptures tell us that if we have once accepted a Brahma-Nishta as our Guru, we should not change our allegiance to another Guru. The spiritual connection or link is eternal. If an aspirant tries to break it and runs after all kinds of Siddhas and Jnanis, he cannot progress even an inch on the path. The ideal is beautifully stated in the Upanishadic Mantra: Yasya deve para bhaktihi yatha deve thatha gurau; tasyaithe kathitahyarthah prakashante mahatmanah (He who has supreme devotion to God and as much devotion to his Guru as he has to God, to him truths of the Upanishads shall be revealed. If devotion to God cannot be changed, devotion to Guru also cannot be changed.

Do not forget the glorious example of Ekalavya. He did not even have a sight of the Guru; but yet his devotion was so great that he took a mere image to be his living Guru and his Bhavana was so intense that this mud-Guru taught him the great secrets of archery. Here it is Bhavana that really counts.

Upa-Gurus, however, can be countless; this is what the life of the Avadhuta that is narrated in the Bhagavata teaches us. We should respect all saints. The spiritual Guru sows the spiritual seed in us. It is our business to water it, to make it grow in us, so that it might in time yield the delicious fruit of Self-realisation.

5. POWERS OF A PERFECT MASTER

Q. May I know the difference between a master and a Perfect Master. Theosophical books given us to understand that a master is a perfected Being, and that others are still on the path. If there is such a difference, can that soul be of a lower degree of perfection? Do we traverse the planes of consciousness, plane by plane, or are there also sub-divisions?

A. A Perfect Master is a Siddha who has reached the highest unitary plane of consciousness. It is optional for the Siddha to remain in that plane permanently (when he would become incommunicable and therefore, of not very much use to the layman) or to come down to lower planes to teach others. Even in the latter case he retains the "key" to the higher plane and he can go back whenever he chooses. All others are Sadhakas or aspiring souls whatever be the plane of consciousness they might have reached. They can teach lesser evolved souls; but they themselves have to strive to rise higher.

There are any number of classifications of the planes. They are not water-tight compartments.....but a gradual evolution towards the Highest. Naturally, you can understand that there may be any number of sub-divisions, according to the experience of the Sadhaka.

Q. From time to time, the past shows us, God sent His chosen messenger whenever the world needed such Enlightened Beings. Is there such an Avatar existing at the present time, and if so, is there such a Being in the Parsi community or in any other community?

A. No age is without its Avatars. Every Saint, Sage or Seer who serves to enlighten people, preserves righteousness and lead men and women on the right path, is an Avatar inasmuch as the Divine Light has "descended" into them. Avatar means such a descent. Even in the case of Avatars they say some are fuller and others are lesser Avatars. For instance, among Avatars Krishna-Avatar is considered Purna (full) Avatar. I believe there is lot of truth in it; but it is a matter for faith rather than of logical reasoning.

Q. Is there a person who claims to be a perfect soul, entitled to use means which go against the morals of any well-principled ordinary human beings? Does spirituality tolerate dishonest ways to attain an honest goal? And is there such a thing as a Master, possessing 49% of badness and 51% of goodness? Seems strange that these characteristics go against the very definition of a Perfect Being!

A. A Perfect Master or a Siddha will never do wrong. Till all the seeds of evil-doing are completely fried one cannot become Perfect! But your notion of what is right and what is wrong may not be the

correct one. So, it is good to leave the Perfect Master alone if you do not have faith in him on account of certain of his actions.

Q. The coming of Christ is an event looked forward to by many. Christ Himself says, "Many shall come in my name, saying 'I am Christ-but believe it not". Then how can ordinary individual souls, mere pigmies in spirituality, be able to recognise such a Soul? For it takes a God to recognise a God". Through some, we hear that a vehicle is being prepared for Him; while some already claim that high position of the world-Teacher. Then who is it we should believe and whom to disbelieve?

A. It does take a God to realise God. There is ever a God in you; and when you approach a real Master you will have an intuitive feeling that he is a Master. It is really a matter of faith. It is really unnecessary to wait for a God to come and guide you. Even an aspirant who has reached one or two steps higher than you can take you to his level or even higher. A fairly advanced aspirant can actually be your spiritual preceptor. If you are sincere and earnest, your own inner Light will guide you to higher and higher Sadhakas.

6. THE QUESTION OF AVATARHOOD

Q. Do you consider any Avatar absolutely perfect in all aspects?

A. Though it is said Krishna was a Purnavatar, no Avatar is indeed absolutely perfect or an exact replica of the Absolute itself. For, the moment the Absolute manifests itself, it is at once conditioned by the laws of Prakriti.

Q. When does the Lord take an incarnation? Why?

A. Whenever there is decay of righteousness, then the Lord takes an incarnation and comes to this earth for the destruction of the evil doers and the protection of Dharma.

Q. Is it necessary that the Lord also should pass through the different stages of human body if He takes an incarnation?

A. Yes, when the Lord takes the human body, it is incumbent on Him also to pass through the stages of childhood, youth, middle age, death, etc.

Q. Are they real?

A. No, they are only apparent in His case.

Q. Almost all religious schools here preach that an Avatar is coming upon this world to remove sins and suffering and to create peace and Dharma. Can you throw some light upon this? When He is coming? What will He do? And how can an individual help Him in His Mission? For how many years will this Kali Yuga last?

A. Do not probe into divine mysteries. Do not rack your brain on this point.

7. OCCULT POWERS AND THE PERFECT MASTER

Q. If an individual is a Perfect Master, he is capable of functioning on all the planes at the same time. He possesses to a remarkable degree the powers of clairvoyance and clairaudience. Can he not read the thoughts before one has the time to utter them, as Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa did, before the student can bring out his questions? Can one who has such powers, even of thought-reading be regarded as a master?

A. Clairvoyance and clairaudience are not always automatic process. Unless the master directs his attention towards some one, he need not necessarily be aware of the seeker's mentality and doubts. Imagine a seer or a Perfect Master who is ever aware of what everybody thinks! A Siddha does see and hear everything in Samadhi; and this everything comes then to mean the Self or Atman or the Supreme Consciousness where the individual thoughts and words cease to exist as such.

Powers like thought-reading, etc., do not necessarily connote Perfection; and Perfection cannot be vetoed by the absence of these powers. A Perfect Master can acquire these powers if he so wills; but you cannot force him to.

8. COMMUNICATION OF GODS WITH MEN

Q. It is mentioned in our Puranas that in days of yore Akashvani was frequently heard by our ancestors who were forewarned of coming events by it. Is it credible? Or, was it only the voice of their own inner intuition?

A. There is some order in the four Yugas. The consciousness of man grows grosser and grosser, as time rolls by. In the previous Yugas man's consciousness was subtler than it is in this Yuga.

In the Satya Yuga, Bhgavan used to move amidst mankind. Human consciousness was not far removed from divine consciousness. In Treta Yuga man's consciousness grew grosser. Though God was not constantly moving amidst human beings there were frequent Avataras of the Lord. In Dwapara Yuga, man's consciousness grew grosser still; and only the Immortal Brahma-Rishis like Narada, Visvamitra, etc., used to move amongst men, and also Akashavanis used to warn people of coming events.

Now we feel that Akashavani is a very rare and miraculous thing; in previous Yugas it was not so. Devas themselves used to Akashavani used to regularly forewarn the people. Just move amongst as we have our Government, the celestials also have their men. And, own Government. Whenever they wish to communicate with mankind they used to do through Akashavani.

Nowadays the deity communicates with the people mainly through dreams and visions. That is practically the only form of communication with human beings that Devas have retained in this Yuga.

9. THE SUPRAMENTAL RACE

Q. Sri Aurobindo mentions in his books a "supramental race"; what did he mean by it?

A. You have to make a thorough study of his books in order to understand what he meant by it; or, alternatively, you have to obtain clarification from his disciple who had moved closely with him and clearly grasped his teachings.

I believe what he meant was this. When man reaches the last stage of involution, you know it will be immediately followed by resurgence. After Kali Yuga, Satya Yuga has to come. You know Satya Yuga, represents the highest state of consciousness. In order to usher in the Satya Yuga, a race of people must spring up towards the close of this Yuga itself-people of a very high stage of consciousness. It may be that Sri Aurobindo referred to this class of people.

Chapter 17

PROBLEMS OF INTERNATIONAL HARMONY

1. WORLD STATE AND WORLD PEACE

Q. Is it impossible to achieve enduring World-Peace? A. World-Peace is possible when all the people of the world wake up to the facts governing universal life and when there is a heart-to-heart feeling of goodness, love and oneness among the inhabitants of the world.

Q. Is it possible to evolve a world-state upholding the virtues of Truth and Non-violence?

A. The possibility of world-state has been a question that has been considered by philosophers from the time of Plato downwards, and by statesmen from time to time such as Bismark. Theoretically, there is no impossibility in a one-world state guarding the interests of the committee of nations of the whole world. But this naturally involves that all the powers concerned should resign some of their authority and powers to the one world state in order to enable it to keep the whole world free from strife, contented and happy. As a matter of fact, it is well-known that this was vaguely envisaged and attempted by the League of Nations after the first world-war, and there are philosophers and politicians of the present day world who are emphatically of the opinion that the present U.N.O. should convert itself into such a world state. But the difficulties in the way of its being achieved are many and obvious. That is why in practice it has been found only an ideal, if not a chimera. In another sense, however, the world can easily become a one-world state if all the nations composing it, free themselves effectively from weakness and feelings inseparable from chauvinism. If the whole world stands by Truth and non-violence and there is no need for national barriers and safeguards of any description, it is obvious that nothing need prevent the whole world from coalescing into one family. Rama-Rajya was such an instance.

2. WORLD-WARS

Q. Why is mankind periodically paralysed with wars?

A. Wars take place because of the material greed, conflict of ideologies, hatred, jealousy and pride of power present in certain leading people or heads of nations or nations collectively as well. Power intoxication makes the people so deluded that often they are blind to the objectives of the war, and destruction becomes their criterion. How foolish people are to plant themselves as conquerors over the corpse of a nation! Though there are methods of preventing wars, the matter is not easy, especially under the prevailing conditions of disharmony, conflict of interests and wrong conception of life. The permanent cure of all wars is stated in some of my works.

3. UNIVERSAL LOVE AND UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD

Q. What is the significance of real brotherhood?

A. Real brotherhood signifies the recognition of the One Divine Principle in all.

Q. Is Visva-Prema an illusion?

A. Visva-Prema is not an illusion. It is a reality and an actuality for those who have realised the oneness of life.

Q. Will there be world-peace if there are no politicians?

A. World-peace does not depend upon the existence non-existence of politicians, if only people, individually and collectively, understand and live up to or the canons of perfect righteousness, i.e., to wisdom, truth and justice. So long as people do not rise to this level, politicians which is only a name for those who are in charge of the administration will continue to be actuated by their selfishness and greed and will accordingly ride rough-shod over the feelings and sufferings of millions and will go on embarking on wars however destructive they may be in general.

Q. What constitutes an informed citizenry, and how it is to be kept informed?

A. When each citizen keeps himself abreast about the needs and the conditions of the land, and of his own part in contributing to the general welfare, the citizenry, is kept informed.

Q. If naturism becomes general, how would rank be decided?

A. Though it is thought that nature produce all on a basis of equality, individuals develop varying personal traits and natures which account for all the differences seen in life. The ranks will be according to their different qualities and capabilities.

4. SPIRITUAL FOUNDATIONS FOR WORLD-UNITY

Q. Can Ahimsa usher in world unity?

A. Yes; it can, when it has got a spiritual background. The last-moving events of the world are teaching and will teach sufficiently large numbers of individuals in every clime to develop faith in it and act on it.

Q. Can spiritual unity be effected on a universal scale?

A. Nothing is ever impossible in the ultimate analysis. The ideal can be attained if there is a sincere, unified effort, individually as well as collectively, by all people to train themselves into appreciating, and aspiring for actively living the noble ideals of self-culture, selflessness, motiveless service, brotherhood, oneness and universal love. Sincere attempts to efface egoism in the individual and to overcome the lower passions of greed, anger, hatred, jealousy, lust, violence, and so on, are the only possible ways of attaining universal unity. Though for the present this might seem to be a utopian dream, but the law of evolution aims at this ultimate ideal. All modes of political, social and cultural unification through the superficial aspects of man and society are bound to fail in the long run, because they do not achieve a fundamental transformation in the basic outlook of not recognising the inherent divinity in every individual, the worthiness and the dignity of every human life, and the underlying merit and demerit of human evolutions.

5. DIVINE LIFE AND WORLD SOLIDARITY

Q. When will that time come when everybody will be healthy, happy and religious?

A. The world is a mixture of three Gunas-Sattva (purity), Rajas (activity), and Tamas (inertia). When Sattva predominates in everyone there will be happiness in the world.

Q. Politics has become the God of the day and is more so in India. Religion has come to be regarded as a superfluous thing. How then is it possible to make everyone believe in God and Religion?

A. It is wrong to regard that politics has got precedence over religion. In personal life, majority of mankind does believe in God and in India there is an under-current of religion throughout the land. Politics is only a surface activity thrust upon most people due to socio-economic forces.

When one gets knocks and blows, when he gets disgusted with the sensual objects on account of their impermanency, when he gets experience and discrimination and dispassion, his mind will be turned towards God. Now he becomes susceptible to religious influence; and the company of good men and spiritual books make him religious. Till then there is no use of forcing religion on this man.

Q. Can Yoga pave the way for world unity? How do you define Yoga?

A. Yoga is the practice necessary for union with the One Being, the inner method of attuning oneself with the Infinite, the way of realisation of the Absolute. Yoga also means this union of realisation itself. When Perfection is attained through Yoga, it is possible to bring about any necessary change. It is accordingly, in the first instance, a means to Perfection to be attained individually. When, however, all over the globe, people collectively, strive for some high ideals and Yogic achievements, it is obvious that there will be no room for the usual human passions which lie at the root of all strife, and without which disunity will die a natural death, which means world unity. But the process is a long one, and real understanding of one's own faith and then of each other's faiths is the prerequisite.

Chapter 18

SIVANANDA YOGA-PRASHNOTTARI

1 THE SELF OF DELIGHT AND ITS ENEMIES

Q. Where can you find eternal happiness?

A. In your own Atman within.

Q. Which is the most troublesome organ?

A. Tongue.

Q. Who is your terrible enemy?

A. Mind..

2. THE BEST AND THE WORST

Q. Who is your best friend?

A. Satsanga or association with the wise.

Q. Who is your real father?

A. Guru.

Q. Which is the best language?

A. Language of the heart.

Q. Which is the best virtue?

A. Brahmacharya.

Q. Which is the worst intoxicant?

A. Lust.

Q. Which is the most sacred river?

A. Brahma-Jnana.

Q. Who is the real king?

A. A Jivanmukta or liberated sage.

Q. Which is the best Dharma?

A. Selfless service.

Q. Which is the worst quality?

A. Anger.

Q. Which is the best thing in this world?

A. Pain (because it is the eye-opener, it goads you to seek liberation).

Q. Which is the best food?

A. Hearing of the Srutis or Upanishads.

Q. Who is the best man?

A. A kind-hearted man.

Q. Who is the worst man?

A. A selfish man.

Q. Where is the worst hell?

A. In the mind filled with jealousy, crookedness and hatred.

Q. Where is the best heaven?

A. In the heart filled with love, mercy and generosity.

Q. Which is the best science?

A. Brahma Vidya or science of Atman.

3. THE STRONG, THE WEAK, THE HAPPY

Q. Which is the most precious thing in this world?

A. Vairagya or dispassion.

Q. Who is the strongest man?

A. He who practices Ahimsa, he who can bear insults, injuries and persecutions with a smiling face.

Q. Who is a weak man?

A. An irritable man.

Q. Who is the happiest man?

A. Tyagi or a man of renunciation.

Q. Who is the most miserable man?

A. A rich man.

Q. Who is the most beautiful man?

A. A Yogi.

Q. Who is the ugliest man?

A. A greedy man.

4. THE SPIRITUAL STANDARD

Q. Who is a beggar?

A. He who has desires.

Q. Which is the biggest ocean?

A. Ocean of Bliss (Brahman or Atman).

Q. Which is the most dangerous thing in this world?

A. Company of a worldly man.

Q. Which is the greatest temptation?

A. Woman for a man, man for a woman.

Q. Which is the most desirable thing?

A. Brahma Jnana.

Q. Who is the best engine driver?

A. God.

Q. Which is the wonderful machine or engine?

A. Mind.

Q. Which is the biggest factory in this world?

A. Mental factory.

5. EVALUATION OF PERSONAL THOUGHT, NATURE, ACTION

Q. Who is a real drunkard?

A. He who is intoxicated with the pride of wealth and learning.

Q. Who is a really blind person?

A. He who has no inner divine eye or the eye of intuition.

Q. Who is the real cobbler?

A. He who thinks that the body is Atman and talks always of matters concerning the body.

Q. What is your foremost duty?

A. To find out this hidden Driver of this body engine, to love Him, to live for Him, to serve Him, to know Him, to realise Him, to live in Him and to merge in Him.

TWENTY IMPORTANT SPIRITUAL INSTRUCTIONS

By

H.H. Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj

1. BRAHMA-MUHURTA: Get up at 4 a.m. daily. This is Brahmamuhurta which is extremely favourable for meditation on God.

2. ASANA: Sit on Padma, Siddha or Sukha Asana for Japa and meditation for half an hour, facing the east or the north. Increase the period gradually to three hours. Do Sirshasana and Sarvangasana for keeping up Brahmacharya and health. Take light physical exercises as walking, etc., regularly. Do twenty Pranayamas.

*3. **JAPA***: Repeat any Mantra as pure Om or Om Namo Narayanaya, Om Namah Sivaya, Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya, Om Saravanabhavaya Namah, Sita Ram, Sri Ram, Hari Om, or Gayatri, according to your taste or inclination, from 108 to 21,600 times daily.

4. DIETETIC DISCIPLINE: Take Sattvic food, Suddha Ahara. Give up chillies, tamarind, garlic, onion, sour articles, oil, mustard, and asafoetida. Observe moderation in (Mitahara). Do not overload the stomach. Give diet up those things which the mind likes best for a fortnight in a year. Eat simple food. Milk and fruits help concentration. Take food as medicine to keep the life going. Eating for enjoyment is sin. Give up salt and sugar for a month. You must be able to live on rice, Dhal and bread without any Chutney. Do not ask for extra salt for Dhal and sugar for tea, coffee or milk.

5. MEDITATION-ROOM: Have a separate meditation-room under lock and key.

6. CHARITY: Do charity regularly, every month, or even daily according to your means, say six Paisa per rupee.

7. SVADHYAYA: Study systematically the Gita, the Ramayana, the Bhagavata, Sri Vishnu-Sahasranama, Lalita-Sahasranama, Aditya Hridaya, the Upanishads or the Yoga Vasishtha, the Bible, the Zend Avesta, the Koran, the Tripitakas, the Granth Sahib, etc.. from half an hour to one hour daily and have Suddha Vichara.

8. BRAHMACHARYA: Preserve the vital force (Veerya) very, very carefully. Veerya is God in motion or manifestation-Vibhuti. Veerya is all power, Veerya is all money. Veerya is the essence of life, thought and intelligence.

9. PRAYER SLOKAS: Get by heart some prayer Slokas, Stotras and repeat them as soon as you sit in the Asana before starting Japa or meditation. This will elevate the mind quickly

10. SATSANGA: Have Satsanga. Give up bad company, smoking, meat and alcoholic liquors entirely. Do not develop any evil habits.

11. FAST ON EKADASI: Fast on Ekadasi or live on milk and fruits only.

12. JAPA MALA: Have a Japa Mala (rosary) round your neck or in your pocket or underneath your pillow at night.

13. MOUNA: Observe Mouna (vow of silence) for a couple of hours daily.

14. SPEAK THE TRUTH: Speak the truth at all cost. Speak a little. Speak sweetly.

15. PLAIN LIVING: Reduce your wants. If you have four shirts, reduce the number to three or two. Lead a happy, contented life. Avoid unnecessary worry. Have plain living and high thinking.

16. NEVER HURT ANYBODY: Never hurt anybody (Ahimsa Paramo Dharmah). Control anger by love, Kshama (forgiveness) and Daya (compassion).

17. DO NOT DEPEND UPON SERVANTS: Do not depend upon servants. Self-reliance is the highest of all virtues.

18. SELF-ANALYSIS: Think of the mistakes you have committed during the course of the day, just before retiring to bed (self-analysis). Keep daily diary and self-correction register. Do not brood over past mistakes.

19. FULFIL DUTIES: Remember that death is awaiting you at every moment. Never fail to fulfil your (Sadachara). duties. Have pure conduct

20. SURRENDER TO GOD: Think of God as soon as you wake up and just before you go to sleep. Surrender yourself completely to God (Sharanagati)

Om Santih Santih Santih!

This is the essence of all spiritual Sadhanas. This will lead you to Moksha. All these Niyamas or spiritual canons must be rigidly observed. You must not give leniency to the mind.

SRI SWAMI SIVANANDA

Born on the 8th September, 1887, in the illustrious family of Sage Appayya Dikshitar and several other renowned saints and savants, Sri Swami Sivananda had a natural flair for a life devoted to the study and practice of Vedanta. Added to this was an inborn eagerness to serve all and an innate feeling of unity with all mankind.

His passion for service drew him to the medical career; and soon he gravitated to where he thought that his service was most needed. Malaya claimed him. He had earlier been editing a health journal and wrote extensively on health problems. He discovered that people needed right knowledge most of all; dissemination of that knowledge he espoused as his own mission.

It was divine dispensation and the blessing of God upon mankind that the doctor of body and mind renounced his career and took to a life of renunciation to qualify for ministering to the soul of man. He settled down at Rishikesh in 1924, practised intense austerities and shone as a great Yogi, saint, sage and Jivanmukta

In 1932 Swami Sivananda started the Sivanandashram. In 1936 was born The Divine Life Society. In 1948 the Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy was organised. Dissemination of spiritual knowledge and training of people in Yoga and Vedanta were their aim and object. In 1950 Swamiji undertook a lightning tour of India and Ceylon. In 1953 Swamiji convened a World Parliament of Religions'. Swamiji is the author of over 300 volumes and has disciples all over the world, belonging to all nationalities, religions and creeds. To read Swamiji's works is to drink at the Fountain of Wisdom Supreme. On 14th July, 1963 Swamiji entered Mahasamadhi.

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